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ABSTRACT

This five-part report describes a study conducted by Middlesex County College (MCC) to examine the problems and experiences of various segments of its student body and to determine, on the basis of this examination, factors that aggravate student/college interaction and increase student attrition. Part I details study procedures, which involved a series of focused group discussions with randomly selected members of eight segments of the MCC community: Black, Hispanic, and veteran students; women students 25 years of age or older; traditional (those who enrolled directly out of high school) and non-traditional (those who did not enroll directly out of high school) students; former students; and faculty and administrators. Part II summarizes, for each group, comments made by participants relating to 15 factors that affect student life: teachers, campus social life, financial problems, family life, faculty advisors, studying, student facilities, MCC's image, student motivation and maturity, MCC's concern for the student's problems and needs, reasons for attending MCC, reasons for leaving, student self-image, and curricular flexibility. Finally, Part III offers vignette profiles of each group, Part IV outlines the areas where the groups agreed or disagreed with respect to each of the 15 factors; and Part V concludes with a series of generalizations concerning factors that positively or negatively affect the student/college relationship. (JP)

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RETENTION:

An Inductive Study of Representative Student Groups at Middlesex County College

Prepared for the Student Retention Committee

Research Report Compiled and Written by:
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September, 1980

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PREFACE

This is a contemporary portrait of various student groups at Middlesex County College. a picture of their conventions, problems, experiences and styles of interaction. It is an examination in detail of the world of the Middlesex student who is successful and the one who is not. Neither a statistical compilation nor a "how to" guide for student retention, it is a report of human experience which we believe describes what is happening in the current environment.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the fall of 1978, the College President appointed and charged with high priority a collegewide committee to study and make recommendations for enhancing student retention. At its first meeting the Director of Institutional Research described attrition as an outcome of the interaction process between students' needs and institutional provisions and added that the variables to be studied from the students' perspective include both the cognitive and the affective domains.

Concentrating primarily on clarification of objectives, semantics and the development of a more appropriate withdrawal instrument, the committee met thoughout 1978-79, incidentally gathering a store of background material at a retention workshop held at Brookdale County College of New Jersey in March 1979.

In the early fall of 1979, the group reconvened, developed its overall goals and set in motion four projects targeted for completion during 1980 as follows:

1. A quantitative attrition report, by curriculum, by semester (Dr. Capoor),
2. Campuswide retention staff development program (Louis Riccardi),
3. Basic Skills competency relationship study (Dr. Kistulentz); and, the subject of this report, its charge here quoted.

4. "Develop, through interviews with staff and students, a report outlining the specific concerns of special student groups which concerns affect retention/attrition with recommendations for action." (Gordon Harrower and John Herrling)

   The following groups were included as being representative of the College Community.

   A. Black Students
   B. Hispanic Students
   C. Veteran Students
   D. Mature Women Students
   E. Traditional Students
   F. Nontraditional Students
   G. Former Students
   H. Faculty and Administrators

In purpose, the study would serve to complement the Institutional Research Office's quantitatively oriented project by providing "live" commentary, spontaneity and flavor of a nature and value not obtainable from a numerical study alone. It would endeavor to identify factors in the College's student attrition which were curriculum related, those which crossed curricula and still others which were not directly occasioned by either of the above. Not by any means confined to those negative characteristics which cause attrition, the study would also seek to pinpoint those elements which positively impacted student retention.

While it was decided to include one group of attritors--the usual subject for most such studies--the concept of obtaining information almost exclusively from those who were still attending the institution was predicated on the assumption that they could provide clearer insights not only into the reasons why students stay but likely more objective opinions and inferences as to why their peers leave--it being axiomatic that withdrawing students tend to give socially acceptable rationale for their leaving college. Also, it was recognized that interviewing enrolled students would probably glean more information than by interviewing their peers who "walked away"--a major segment of MCC's attrition--about whose departures little was known.

At the outset, the subcommittee suggested to the Retention Committee that an outside professional organization specializing in retention-connected interview work be engaged to assist in planning, initial execution and subsequent interpretation. This approach the committee endorsed and recommended to the administration--however, budgetary reality mandated that consultant assistance be postponed until a later stage. The foregoing is mentioned primarily to illustrate the reactions of the two consultants who were contacted. Dr. Nancy Armes, of the University of Texas at Austin, who offers a wide variety of retention-related workshops, observed that the committee's concept of gathering information from students who were still attending the institution--as opposed to former students, the usual source in attrition studies--was "brilliant" and that her organization might itself pursue it. Enrollment Analysis' Stephen Yale, a leading authority in the field, stated that the committee was "on the right track."

METHODOLOGY

The method employed consisted of gathering grounded data from focused interviews and, through the inductive process of abstracting, arriving at generalizations which are represented by that data. (This is known as the inductive method.) The term "factors" used herein is defined as groupings of "grass roots" observations, made by trained observers, which describe relationships, coping styles, interactions and processes used by individual members of sub-groups. These can be further collapsed into aggregate group factors where appropriate.

It was decided to select at random 20 individuals from each student group, plus a like number of faculty/administrators and invite them to participate with their peers and College interviewers at group meetings (see exhibit A). While each group was clearly defined and its members fit its defintion, it was possible that individuals in one group might, by virtue of sex, age or experience also fit another. For instance, a mature woman could also be black or Hispanic or a veteran and, given institutional terminology, she was de facto nontraditional. Typical of the focus group interview process, a random selection was made and the participants were in essence volunteers from each group. Most of the demographic characteristics (sex, age, race and ethnic origin) of each interview unit were quite similar to those of the student population which it represented, and the group units collectively were representative of the student body as a whole.

The focused group interview approach was adopted as being particularly well suited for the purpose of eliciting from the participants candid observations about their (and their classmates') perceived experiences and use of resources as students at Middlesex County College. It should be noted that uniformity of questions (as in a present day job interview) and responses were deliberately avoided, in favor of creating a

relaxed atmosphere in which the students could feel at ease about speaking their minds. In the words of Robert Bazilla, President of Benson and Benson:

> "Focused interviewing is a technique that consists of a moderator introducing a topic of discussion to a panel of survey conferees, and , while unobtrusively guiding the discussion through certain predetermined aspects of the topic, encouraging the conferees to react to one another's remarks and to state their own concerns, opinions, and experiences. This approach allows the conferees to draw upon stimuli other than those provided by the moderator or sponsoring client, and ultimately can present a more objective view of the concerns and feelings of the conferees.
>
> This has the positive advantage of mapping out the potential range of opinions and experiences concerning a given topic, but the technique does not yield quantitative results and does not always lend itself to probing any particular aspect of the problem in depth.
>
> As in any group situation, focused interviewing can present problems of group dynamics; e.g., those who wish to dominate the conversation, deference of juniors to seniors, unwillingness to discuss true feelings in the presence of others, etc. For the most part, however, these problems can be overcome by the moderator's handling of the discussion."

Following the decision to employ the focused group interview approach, open-ended questions (see exhibit B) were developed by the subcommittee for the structured interview sessions and a questionnaire (see exhibit C) was prepared to obtain generally parallel information from the interviewees. During the formative stages of this project, particularly that of

developing questions for use in focused interviews, assistance was sought from the Office of Institutional Research with regard to project validity and shaping the nature of this study to complement that office's study.

The interviewers were carefully chosen by the co-chairmen on the basis of 1) prior group interview experience, 2) appropriate educational background and 3) ability for relating particularly well with students. In addition to the co-chairmen (who, for consistency's sake, were to be present at all interview sessions), the following faculty and administrators served as focused group interviewers:

Mercedes Basadre (Community Services)
Leslie Carter (Counseling and Placement Services)
Kevin Dohrenwend (Counseling and Placement Services)
Lynne Dudka (Admissions)
Fanny Gordon (Educational Opportunity Fund)
Ann Houpt (Counseling and Placement Services)
Susan Lazzarotti (Counseling and Placement Services)
Maxine Lisboa (Independent Study)
Kenneth B. Maugle (Counseling and Placement Services)
Jerry Olson (English)
Norman Poppel (Social Sciences)
Robert Smith (Chemistry)
Robert Zifchak (Health, Physical Education and Recreation)

The total panel of observer/interviewers was convened on several occasions for orientation, training and briefing on methodology and objectives and assisted in the development of questions. Assignment of these colleagues to interview groups was then made, to some extent predicated on a match between the interviewers' backgrounds and those of the participants (see exhibit D). However since, as noted, most of the groups reflected mixtures of categories, a balance was maintained within interviewing teams, each of which typically consisted of four observer/interviewers.

Letters of invitation to interviewees--which included the incentive offer of two complimentary tickets for lunches at the Corral Restaurant--were mailed in early April 1980 and responses to them were sufficient so that it became necessary to contact a second round with only four groups. Based upon information from Benson & Benson, Inc. and our own Institutional Research Department, it was decided that six participants from each group was the minimum number required for validity in focused group studies--yet, as is shown on exhibit "D", this number was exceeded in all but one of the groups.

The focused group interview phase--as detailed in exhibit "D"--was concluded on June 5, 1980, by which time the analysis of concrete data (interview statements) was already underway. The analysis process involved the following series of steps:

1. Extraction from taped interviews, the material for data cards and group vignettes.
2. Formation within each group of first level abstraction of those factors which each group found important to it (i.e.: Blacks--discrimination).
3. Consolidation of group factors which were generally similar into larger abstractions for the College as a whole which are called aggregate group factors.
4. Further analysis of aggregate factors by the group factors they contained in order to say what the similarities and differences were among groups.

It should be noted that some of the data which gave way to factors was collapsed into those factors as being representative of only a few groups. Not lost in the process, these data appear within the body of this report where indicated (for example, prejudice--as reported by Blacks, Hispanics and mature women--shows up under "faculty" and "social life", the factors related to this phenonenon).

The aggregate factors which emerged as a result of steps 2 and 3 above and which apply to all MCC students in varying degrees are:

1. teachers
2. social life
3. economics
4. family
5. advisors
6. studying
7. services
8. image
9. motivation
10. maturity
11. care
12. why they came
13. why they leave
14. self-image
15. flexibility

FACTORS

Introduction:

The following are the important group factors which emerged from the interview tapes. Data cards were surveyed and sorted by content into discrete categories. All categories from the interview groups were surveyed to arrive at the fifteen factors which appeared in each of the group interviews. For example, each group saw the faculty as a factor related to its success or failure as students. From these factor definitions, one can see just how each group used each factor, what its attitudes and conventions were in dealing with these factors and the group-related interaction processes. For each group, every factor is unique and offers insight to the ways in which that factor impacted on that group. Here the reader finds a multitude of definitions "by interview group" which, later in a section of this report, is further analyzed for similarities and differences.

VETERAN STUDENTS

Factor 1--Teachers

Veteran students generally found faculty to be very helpful, professional people doing a good job. They found that specific faculty would encourage them and give them a lot of help. Instructors tended to be available and eager to give extra help and provided a lot of motivation through the courses. Some ways in which they helped were by giving tutoring and by letting people change sections when they needced to work. These students said that they found instructors and counselors helpful and generally interested in their progress. It seemed that the one characteristic which allowed them this interaction was that the student body was not too large and they could get close to faculty. Specifically, psychology and mathematics professors were singled out as being particularly helpful. They saw these instructors as professional people doing a good job and very few of them as "just working out their time".

Veteran students generally felt that the majority of their teachers oriented students to courses and prepared them for the course well, although one believed that some faculty did not relate well to students. In general, they said things like, "If I had a problem academically, I would go to the instructor first. If you try, you can find an answer to a problem." "In Science Transfer," one said, "I got a lot of help from my instructors."

Factor 2--Social Life

They mentioned that it would help to have dorms. Veterans were not too interested in social life, but said if you were, you could meet people easily at MCC. One said, "your friends are where you go after class," and for these veterans it was at home. A person allowed that he did not go to sports contests because he had no friends here. Middlesex was described as a "good marriage market" and the VA work-study program was a source of both social and work activity.

Comment was made that one did not make friends at Middlesex, just acquaintances, that friends tended to be at home. One did not know what was going on on campus because one saw people for only 50 minutes in class. Everyone had his own business outside the campus. It was felt that people kept their friends from home and form only acquaintances at the College, not close friends.

Factor 3--Economics

Veteran students appeared to view money and the economic situation as important in both their reasons for coming and their success here. The major reason for coming appeared to be low cost. In order to succeed at college, they seemed to feel that they needed money besides their veterans' benefits. The work-study program provided financial benefits. Working outside of campus was a reality for them. Jobs were more important than student activities. One said that he had his own apartment and had to pay for everything. He commented that it was really easier to live at home.

Reasons for leaving among their friends appeared to be rotating shifts at work and family responsibilities, both of which were related to economic pressures as causes for leaving. Some 06teran students found jobs more appealing than school and this then became a reason for leaving. They believed everyone was looking for a job and that was why activities and sports were suffering at the college. It was felt that it was hard to go full-time here and that often they needed to go part-time so that they could work.

Factor 4--Family

Veteran students felt that their success was achieved on their own and while some did get help from their parents, many of them lived in their own apartments and paid everything themselves. Others said, "It's a lot easier to live at home--my parents feed me, give me a place to stay, that's their way of supporting me." Another said, "Although I'm really motivated, I might have dropped out, but my parents helped me a little in my motivation." Another one said, "When I need someone to give me a kick in the butt, my parents really do it, they are pushers." Another one chimed in to say, "When I start falling off, my parents say 'get your---out of here and get going.'"

Other family relationships and the support received from them were evidenced by a student whose father lived in Philadelphia but suggested that he come to Middlesex because "it's a good school." Another one said that he was married and his wife gave him both financial and emotional support.

Factor 5--Advisors

One person said he was ready to graduate and just found out who his advisor was. Several said they did not know who their advisors were. One student said that he went to the Veterans' Office and made up his entire two-year program and then took it to his advisor for signature, while still another said that his advisor was a very busy person. He'd make appointments and she wouldn't be there. Finally, one student said, "There was an advisor who said he knew nothing about the college...'I just don't know,'" was the advisors response. One noted he got good help from an advisor the week before college started. It was felt that people went to faculty that they liked for advisors even though they were assigned to others.

Factor 6--Study

Several of the veterans agreed that college was not as hard as they had expected. Another added that it was probably not as hard because he was not also working at a job. Another said that he did have sufficient time to study but as far as where and how to study are concerned, it was a little more difficult. There was general agreement that in the library, there were not enough study rooms, that it was almost impossible to get one, that the library had too much commotion, that there needed to be more study spaces or separate rooms. One of the students said he went to Raritan Hall and found an empty classroom in which to study.

Factor 7--Services

The first topic here was the Veterans Office about which there were a number of comments. One person got a VFW scholarship through this office; another was going to quit at midterm and an advisor there encouraged him to continue and coached him. Another one used this office as a resource in making up his entire program of study at the college. Other observations about the office were that the staff could use more training, that they seem to be "out to lunch all the time", and finally, that a student who got a lot of help there when he needed a tutor.

About the registration process, a veteran said that he registered reasonably early and that he did this by mail. He did not realize that, as he put it, "20,000 people come and stand in line." He said, "I wouldn't do that." Another said that "late registration is 'the pits.'" Another comment about registration, was that, "the new system will allow me to pick my instructors, and the new process will show who the best ones are."

About other services, "People in the administration building would always tell you where to get help; eventually you end up in the right place." Student activities suffered because people did not stay around as there was no reason to stay.

Counselors seemed to be helpful and were generally interested in veterans' progress. However, one person stated that he got steered wrong with Open College, which he said he didn't need and this was later confirmed by its department head.

Study rooms in the library were not available frequently enough; "It's impossible to get small study rooms" and, "The library is too noisy," were comments frequently made by students.

About student activities, it was felt that everyone was looking for jobs--therefore, activities and sports suffered.

Factor 8--Image

It seemed when a veteran was coming home, he or she looked around for what was near home and what had a good reputation. After some experience at the College, there was general agreement that they would recommend MCC to someone thinking about college and most agreed that they would recommend it to high school seniors. One reason for that was that the classes were much smaller than in four-year colleges and they felt that that was better. They knew friends in four-year colleges who had to go to extremely large lecture sections. They said it was more personal at Middlesex and that appealed to them. As a group, they could not understand why people thought of MCC as a second rate college--the courses were the same, the content was the same and although that may have been their opinion before they came, now that they had experience, their opinion has changed. Someone said, "I bought an MCC t-shirt when I first came here and I wear it." Another one said, "I'd wear it if it

was clean and handy in my drawer. I'd wear it to a party, I have nothing to hide." Furthermore, they thought that maybe their instructors weren't as demanding as at Rutgers University but that they were getting the same content. Their friends believed they were going to a college with a good reputation and that was important to them. They thought they would be able to go on to better things as a result of their education. They found the four-year college atmosphere more intimidating and impersonal, and they preferred the two-year college for that reason, also, because they could transfer their credits to four-year colleges. This made it a first-rate college to them. They generally seemed to have lifelong learning perspective.

Factor 9--Motivation

The veterans as a group appeared to be highly motivated, beginning with the way they started in college. One started early enough so that the onset of college went smoothly. He commented that those who started at the last minute had some problems getting their courses. Another observed that he was really motivated, otherwise he would have dropped out. Self-discipline was noted as a means for achieving, that discipline is needed in order to succeed. One commented that once he started something, he wanted to finish--that was his motivation. A reflection was offered that knowing the work in advance helped in one's motivation. Another student commented that on one occasion a teacher had not ordered the textbooks on time and the teacher remarked that by the time the book came in it would be too late for the class to use. This veteran went elsewhere and bought the book and said "that's just what it took" and that the service experience taught one how to cope with new situations. Another said that his motivation was that he was beginning at age 26 and needed this to establish himself. Generally, the veterans felt that one tried, one could find an

answer to a problem. There was only one who appeared to be unmotivated; he had not met his advisor in three semesters, and had not made the effort to establish that contact.

Factor 10--Maturity

A man said, "If I have a goal in mind, I can't let other things come first." He had achieved success on his own and got no help from anybody else. A student said he took off from work when he needed to prepare for an exam because school was more important. He said, "I've got the potential and I want to develop it." A veteran said the teachers took it for granted that veterans knew where they were headed. Veterans were not overwhelmed by college because of having undergone the military experience.

Several agreed with the statement that people needed maturity to succeed and the younger students could profit from staying out, in other words away from college, for a year after high school. Some have observed younger students behaving immaturely in class, (i.e., flying paper planes and cutting up in the classroom). They added that it was generally too easy to drop courses and that a lot of younger students took advantage of this when they encountered their first academic difficulties.

Factor 11--Care

One veteran said, "I don't think the College is interested in me, but I'm pretty down on myself anyway." Others felt that individuals in the College were interested in them but not necessarily the institution itself. They thought that they were "just another Social Security number," another "fish in the ocean." This seemed to be born out by the fact that when one made the Dean's List, one got a computer printed letter. They also felt, though, that instructors were more personal than at four-year colleges and that they cared more for their students. In general, the feeling that people cared seemed to be an important factor to veterans.

Factor 12--Reasons for Coming

"The fact that it is only a two-year college helps me stick it out. It doesn't seem like such a long time as a four-year college program. At the next college, it will only be two more years and breaking it up is a great help. The two-year college helps you. If you make it, you can go on and if you don't, you will at least have some college." Other reasons for coming, it was felt, were that "I needed a place to start...I needed remedial work. I needed to improve my study habits. I needed a place to continue my education." Cost, location and flexibility were also reasons for coming. Several people mentioned the reputation of the school as the reason, and the reputation of particular programs was another. One veteran said, "I tried it in the summer and I liked it and that's why I continued." Finally, someone said, "I want a Bachelor's degree from Rutgers; I'm married, so a two-year AA degree seems like a good place to start just in case I can't finish. It seems like a low risk place to start and a starting point that can be parlayed into future goals."

Factor 13--Reasons for Leaving

Veterans' perceptions of why younger students left were largely because they came here not of their own choice originally, because they did not have good study habits from high school, and because they could not take as much "new stuff", as it was called, all at once. Veterans felt that not developing friendships might have been a reason for others to leave. Several people gave as their reason for leaving here that they would be transferring to four-year colleges while still somewhat short of graduation from Middlesex. Another person said that he'll be doing the same thing and would rather transfer out of the College effective Fall 1980, then to stick around and graduate in January 1981 and have to transfer at midyear.

A veteran related that rotating shifts at work caused his friend to drop out, that economics were the reason. Another said family responsibilities and economic pressures had caused peers to leave the institution. Still another stated that his friend left because his job was more appealing than college.

Factor 14--Self-Image

Veterans tended to be realistic, more independent, goal oriented people, as evidenced by statements like: "Being a student is pretty much what I expected." "The concept of sacrificing now for future goals is one I accept." "People need maturity to succeed in college; perhaps they should stay out for a year or so after high school." So they saw themselves as more mature students and believed that teachers, too, perceived them differently. They said, "people took us for granted, that we knew what we were doing on first impression." Their realistic and mature self-image was also evidenced by this statement: "In the service, I found everything to complain about. It was expected that I do that. But coming here, I can't find too much to complain about." Although they felt that they were chronologically behind others, they were anxious to get through and so had a lot of drive. This was also evidenced by their helping others. One said, "I helped a friend get the GED in the service.. now he has his Masters in psychology."

Factor 15--Flexibility

Veterans who worked and had other obligations found that when they encountered flexibility, it was an important factor to them. They stated, "Some instructors were willing to let you switch courses around" and, "an instructor helped me by letting me change sections when I needed to work." Another veteran stated that, compared to other colleges he has known, the flexibility of courses offered at Middlesex was very appealing.

Veterans noted that they were pleased by class sizes which were much smaller here than at four-year colleges. They also felt the student body was not too large and this had the same advantages as the class size being small. As to academic calendar, these students unanimously objected to the fact that Middlesex started late in the fall, required a Christmas break and then resumed for classes and finals and, only then, a midyear break. They felt the first semester should end by Christmas.

Odds and Ends--Coping Skills

The veterans as a group seemed to be adept in coping with the systems of the College. Several of them remarked that they were not overwhelmed by the college experience because of their military experience. It helped them in coping. Specifically, they remarked that they could tolerate frustration with the organization. One said that if he wanted a course he did not put it on his pre-registration form under elective or alternate, he put it under a major required course and then it went through every time. They seemed to get information because they searched out areas in which to find it. One said that he heard about the new registration system because he just asked until he found out. One of them went to an instructor who would always tell him where to go for the help. "We go looking ourselves for information that we need before we demand it from the College. Help is available in coping from the veterans office in tutoring, for scholarships, and in campus involvement."

TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

(Traditional students are defined as those who attended college directly following high school graduation)

Factor 1--Teachers

Students said that teachers helped locate and orient them and asked about their interests and specialties. They said they felt luckier than their friends who were students at Rutgers because the latter have very large classes there and Middlesex classes were small. "We could ask questions and find the faculty in their offices." They said that teachers and students respect each other, and, "my teachers in Engineering Science are available to me and the other students. It's a small group, classes are small, and we work together." Some classroom instructors referred students to their advisors rather than helping them directly. Others said when they needed help in mathematics the instructor sent them to their advisors. On the other hand, it was reported that teachers within the MAD curriculum assisted with students' portfolios and they elped in transfer to other colleges. The difference between college and high school, they said, was that "you don't have to go to class, the teachers don't require attendance, but they have a good feel for their students, and they seem to appreicate those who do come to class." They reported that teachers were helpful, that they answered questions when asked, and furthermore that faculty could be their friends and that they could have good social interactions. On the other hand, another said, "Boy! my Accounting teacher was boring. But now I find that he seems to care a little more as the semester progresses." Traditional students sometime saw their teachers as role models. The students mentioned certain teachers for whom they had respect, that they were their friends, they were smart, they had senses of humor and they saw them as people that they would like to be like.

Factor 2--Social Life

Traditional students claimed they enjoyed their first year because they met people from other towns, and friends came here who they had known before. They said there was hardly any social life, not enough to really bring students together but they did make friends with faculty and found some whom they could respect. In terms of social life, they often looked to their curriculum groups and claimed that on some occasions they had not had much interaction with them.

Factor 3--Economics

Nothing reported under this factor by this group.

Factor 4--Family

Familial influences were felt in why people came here. One student said that his brother and his friend influenced him to come. Another said "my mother and father wanted me to go to this college, and it worked out very well for me." My brother and I felt welcome here when we first came."

Factor 5--Advisors

A student said, "I don't know who to go to with a problem because my advisor is never in his office. My schedule conflicts with his." One could not find his advisor, and this was echoed by several students in the group. Another did not know who to go to with problems, noting his advisor was not available. A student said that classroom instructors "refer me to my advisor, rather than help me themselves." A woman noted that, having "fooled around this year", and perhaps being ineligible to return, she did not know to whom she should go about this question of policy.

Factor 6--Studying

No Comment.

Factor 7--Services

Traditional students saw "administrators" as being helpful, both in entering the College, and afterwards. There were some complaints to do with their own impatience about the computer system and its sluggishness when they needed a transcript immediately, but they generally felt that the individual people involved in the Registrar's Office were helpful. They also rated the Registrar's Office very positively in being pleasant, but generally were not well informed about where to find services that they might want, such as counseling.

Factor 8--Image

These traditional students were pleasantly surprised at the caliber and quality of the College after they had enrolled. One man had had the impression that it would be an institution for "burnouts", however, his experience here has been very good. He said that he would stay if Middlesex were a four-year college. Another replied that MCC was not very academic in his mind because his friends who had been accepted here were not smart; but he was glad that he could come and would stay four years if he could. On the whole, they enjoyed their time here, met a number of new people, and intended to return and graduate because it had been a good personal experience for them. The statement, "MCC rate OK with me," summarized the opinion of this group.

Factor 9--Motivation

Very little was said by this group about motivation; however, one student offered that he was sure of his choice of a major and he could come here and study it right away.

Factor 10--Maturity

With this group, it was difficult to distinguish between motivation and maturing as they seemed to overlap.

Factor 11--Care

A traditional student said the College was collectively interested in his future, that it provided good information on transfer and that the teachers were interested in his future. He went on to say that he wished it were a four-year college, and that he dreaded going to Rutgers University next year because "nobody cares over there."

Factor 12--Why They Came

Traditional students were largely influenced by family and friends. One said, "my brother and his friends influenced me to come here, and I felt welcome here when I first came; also friends came here and they liked it." Another said, "My mother and father wanted me to go to this school, and it's worked out real well for me." Other reasons were, its proximity to home, its reputation as a good community college, its size--they did not want a big college right away--and the reputation of a particular curriculum. Another said "I can come by bus, it was convenient in transportation." Generally, it was reported that they enjoyed their first year and that they met people from other parts of the community, which was important to them.

Factor 13--Why They Leave

Only a little was said on the subject of leaving, except that in order to be successful at Middlesex, "you have to work hard and know what you want." People who had left, who were known to these traditional students, had not known what they wanted when they came.

Factor 14--Self-image

These students observed that they felt the freedom to direct themselves towards their educational goals and were treated more like adults than in high school. This was noted as a big difference. They were not forced to study and were treated as human beings. Another ruefully stated she might not be able to come back next year, had finally pulled herself together and

hoped it was not too late. A woman said she felt quite independent and enjoyed good relationships with teachers. She added that one could really do things on one's own, since the opportunities were available to work independently.

Factor 15--Flexibility

Students thought that flexibility was an important factor in that they could try a curriculum like Accounting, for instance, and that it was easy to change from it to a different major. Another decided to change her goals during the first semester, as she did not like her curriculum, and was now studying something else. She was still not sure about her goal, but that flexibility was important to her.

Class size seemed to be a very important factor to this group as evidenced by the statement, "I never had more than 30 students in a classroom, and there were more opportunities to ask questions than in a big college." Or as another student put it, "My teachers were very available to me and other students." We had smaller classes and we worked together." It was felt that the classes were small enough, and that the students felt much luckier than their friends at Rutgers where they were in very large classes--because they could ask questions and talk to their faculty.

MATURE WOMEN

(Mature women are defined as being 25 years of age or older)

Factor 1--Teachers

Mature women observed that being able to talk with their instructors had helped their experiences at MCC. Some thought they might have expected too much from their instructors because the instructors did not seem to have enough time to treat all the students as individuals with individual, special problems. But they also felt that instructors did interact with the students and that this personal contact made it a better place to be than a university where there were very large lecture sections. They felt certain problems existed with teachers and these were that some teachers were demeaning to students, putting them down, because they were getting financial aid--or speaking in a insulting way to them. Another said, "the teacher anticipates my questions and answers what he thinks they are instead of listening to them." Sometimes the teachers discouraged those students who were not "A" caliber students. However, the feeling was that "all the instructors were well qualified, and most are excellent teachers." They felt that teachers should make a subject "fit into a whole thing." Some of them, they added, skipped around, left things out, and didn't attempt to pull the subject together.

The academic level of work was generally what they expected except that the sciences were harder than anticipated and they felt that some of those teachers should be teaching higher level courses, not introductory courses. They complained about class cancellation boards, where they are located, and whether or not the information was correct.

Mature women noted that faculty expectations of evening students were different than of full-time day students. At night, the instructors tended to approach the students with a more mature attitude than during the day. The same teacher

would demean a younger student and respect an older student. They felt that day teachers were not as relaxed in their attitudes as night teachers. In general, they felt faculty attitudes were good and, if they could go to their teacher for help, they were satisfied, but if they could not, they would even consider going to another college.

Factor 2--Social Life

There were a few comments from these students to the effect that students did not have time to socialize. They made a few casual but not close friends and, typically because of their ages, some of these friends were veteran students. It was suggested that the College construct a swimming pool which would provide a better environment for social life. The faculty was mentioned as a source of some social interaction.

Factor 3--Economics

The topic of work was mentioned frequently among this group, several of whom said they might have to drop out to take jobs. Some were obliged to solve their money problems by taking on as many as three jobs. A woman had to drop out last semester because she needed to work and said she would have liked to have been able to change her courses to the evening and not lose all her credits.

One observed that if worry about money matters took all her energy, she could not work effectively on academics. Another person said she was determined to not give up and if she did not have money for gas she would hitchhike. She believed transportation problems might make it impossible for her to attend; and if she stopped and started too many times, she might just get discouraged and "pack it in." If public transportation was more available from where she lived, she would prefer that to using her own car since she made only a small amount of money in her job compared to what she spent on

gasoline. One person said that this financial aid needed for foreign students and that there were not enough jobs on campus--also, that schedules were not compact enough to allow students to work for the money they need. The cashier was described as being "very understanding when the final bill could not be paid" because she granted an extension.

Nursing students commented that their major at MCC did not transfer successfully to the junior year level of BSN nursing programs. They felt that better articulation with these programs would help them to complete their bachelors' degrees in four years rather than five. Specific mention was made of the microbiology course in the nursing program which had three credits whereas that in the four-year institutions was four credits. This was expressed as an economic factor in that the student was obliged not only to spend more time but more money completing the Bachelor of Science nursing program.

Factor 4--Family

Several women believed that, because they were studying at home and had families they were more free to extend their educational deadlines and to take additional courses; that, having these "satisfiers" in their lives, they did not feel so much urgency to finish quickly. Some others thought, however, that with going to school and supporting families, it might become necessary to actually leave school since the pressure might be too much. One suggestion that was agreed to by all was that having examinations after Christmas was really an imposition on family life. They wanted to get their finals over before Christmas because they all needed vacations and rest. They were certain that this would reduce some of the pressures in their very busy lives.

Factor 5--Advisors

Mature women were very articulate about their feelings towards advisement. One said, "I needed my schedule signed last semester, and my advisor couldn't be found. They should keep their office hours." Another added, "I found every time my faculty advisor had office hours, he wasn't there." Generally they felt that advisors did not have time to treat students as individuals with special problems. If they could not go to their teachers for help, they thought that they were wasting time here and they would even consider going to another college. When asked to whom they would turn to about a problem of staying or leaving, four said they would go to their faculty advisors and five said they would go to counselors.

Factor 6--Study

Several patterns emerged relating to studying. Some felt the adequacy of the library could be increased if there were more study rooms there and that a smoking room was needed. Intensive study was done in the library while the lounges and the cafeteria provided places for less formal or less intense study. One person offered that studying in her car was good for her because she could smoke and it was not noisy. The comment that students needed a smoking area in the library is needed came up several times. There was a feeling that studying at home was more convenient and comfortable than on campus because one could have coffee and cigarettes, as well as quiet.

Factor 7--Services

It was noted that the Financial Aid Office was understaffed in terms of adequacy of student contact and support, and that "even if you knew enough to go there for help in the first place, you didn't always get the help you needed". The system of financial aid, a woman noted, "is not understood by the students at MCC and there aren't enough jobs on campus." A

student said her award was held up, and she had to drop out because financial aid did not come through. Another added that her "work study position is not at all connected with my career goals and that there should be a better system." About the registration process, Registrar's office personnel were described as "rude", they "barked at you" and "made you afraid to ask questions." "Add-drop gave me a problem." The universal answer on the office that bugs you the most was "the Registrar and Financial Aid Office." One woman said that "Orientation probably would have been helpful but I was working, and was unable to go." Several students noted that Orientation had been very helpful. Working at a job was described as a situation which needed attention and was labelled as their biggest problem. Also, "there should be more busses to the campus since the public transportation system is not adequate." Campus police came in for some good and bad marks. One said they were helpful when she had an accident, another said the same thing about her automobile breakdown incident, but consistently the group deplored the notion that the police should carry firearms. When asked where you would go if you had to leave, or were in a jam, one person said she would go to admissions to see somebody she had met earlier, while another said there was no one who could help her, and that nobody would want to listen to her problems anyway. On the other hand, many people said they had gone to counselors already and had good experiences. As to the question of staying or leaving, the group was about evenly divided on whether they would go to a faculty advisor or counselor, but there seemed to be no problem in going to either of these types of supportive people.

Factor 8--Image

Some women stated that while in high school they saw the College as a "glorified high school." Some who had gone to other colleges and dropped out felt that if they had come here first it would have been a good place to start and they probably would have finished a four-year degree by now. MCC

received good reviews from these students; they noted that the graduates rated well and one said "Graduates of my curriculum are working at good jobs." One said, "They go to MCC because the graduates do well, and they know their stuff and they have good teachers." Another said, "I took a course 10 years ago; I think the books are better now, and some of them are written by professors here and they are very good." High school counselors seemed to influence the mature women to come to MCC. They felt that class size had a great deal to do with the quality of their experience.

Factor 9--Motivation

When asked who was instrumental in getting them to go to college, several of them agreed that it was self-motivation; they had reached a point where they wanted more out of life. One who was 38 years old and had two children said, "Competition spurs me on--I never had an "A" in high school; now I'm an "A" student. I work very hard." These women thought they did better because they knew the value of an education and they knew what they wanted. It was felt that an unpleasant experience with one instructor would not be cause to drop out. Another said that, "even though I get discouraged at times, I wouldn't drop out, it's the 13 credits--I don't want to lose them--I put in the time, I've invested something that means a lot to me and I couldn't quit." Other signs of determination were, "If I didn't have the money for gas I'd hitchhike to school." Determination was also shown when a nursing student figured out how to be a full-time student without getting in conflicting courses by signing up for DCE Saturday and Sunday courses so she could be a full-time student. When questioned about economic motivation, they felt that being college graduates would have a financial payoff for them. A few years ago they might not have seen the connection and might have dropped out because they did not perceive all the benefits. They claimed that worrying about money took much of their energy and effected their efficiency in school work. Mature

women felt that younger students should try a two-year college as a place to start and "if they make it," go on to a four-year college education.

Factor 10--Care

Mature women found that people who worked on campus were friendly and so were their instructors. They did complain, however, that instructors often did not take time to treat them as individuals.

Factor 11--Why They Came

The group said that on the whole they came here because they had reached points in their lives where they wanted more out of life and because they wanted to go to college for themselves. They picked MCC because of cost, convenience, and good transfer possibilities. They also chose MCC for the curricula offered, in contrast to other colleges such as Union. They also mentioned that they preferred to start at a two-year college where they could get along better and relate to their teachers.

Factor 12--Why They Leave

Financial considerations played the biggest part in why these students might leave the institution. The opinion was expressed that they might have to drop out of college to take jobs in order "to stay alive." They seemed to rely very heavily on the Financial Aid Department to keep them going. As to their perceptions of why others have left, they mentioned knowing some veterans who had lost their motivation and "felt school was not going to help them.".

Factor 13--Self-Image

Basically, self-image was divided into negative and positive factors. Negative factors involved such observations as, "If I decided to leave I don't think anyone could help me, I don't think anyone would even want to listen to my complaints." They said if they felt they were demeaned or insulted by a teacher of a major course because of statements about them getting financial aid, that they would probably be afraid to stand up for themselves. In the service area, if people were rude to them, they were afraid to ask questions. Basically, positive self-image included elements like wanting a challenge, wanting better grades and not "C's" such as they had gotten in high school, feeling that the study load was "horrible" but working very hard on it, and the willingness to consistently work hard in order to succeed. Their willingness to try to solve their own problems was demonstrated by: going to orientation, (in oen case) working at three jobs in order to continue in school, learning to turn stress into constructive energy, seeing vacations as necessary, feeling that competition spurred them on, expressing specific goals (like "I know that education has a value and I want it"), willingness to put forth the effort to get to know the professor, sitting right up in front of the class and being more verbal than in high school, and being willing to change. One woman said, "I get more results if I speak up; it's my fault if I don't get close to my instructors." Generally the mature women expressed a self-image that included definite goals for family relationships, a desire for relationships on a personal level with other people, and, they said, "this is a warm place to be, not a cold institution. It's conducive to personal growth. I like my instructors to know me and I like to receive credit for my input." They also saw this as a place where their self-image would be able to develop, where they would be able to set new goals for themselves in terms of majors and life work.

Factor 15--Flexibility

They felt more elective courses should be added to our majors which were very structured at the present time. This comment was echoed by a nursing student who said that Death and Dying, for instance, would be a good course incorporation for the Nursing curriculum.

They said it was important to know the college schedule in advance so that they could arrange for such matters as child care and household maintenance. A comment was made that even though the instructors seemed to have too many students with whom to interact MCC was preferable to Rutgers and other institutions which had large numbers of students in a section.

FORMER STUDENTS

Factor 1--Teachers

Former students' comments about faculty were mixed. One said, "At night, college some teachers cared a lot and some didn't care at all; I needed extra help and wasn't able to get it."

One woman said, "I needed help in math and the teacher refused to give it." Another thought a better evaluation system for teachers was needed. Still another said, "Some faculty seem to be more fit for research than for classroom teaching", and another faculty member was reported to have said in the class, "If you read the text, I shouldn't have to teach you."

There were some adverse comments about the teachers' threatened strike in the fall; more class time was spent in discussing strike issues than those of the subject matter at hand.

Another student said, "The teachers tended to respect me when I went to them for academic advice." One student pointed out that the last person he would go to for help was his dean. When questioned about this, he said, "His title is too awesome."

Factor 2--Social Life

The former students felt that social life was very important. They said, "You can't do college alone, you need support and help from others. The problem is, it's a hard place to make new friends." They thought dormitories would help the social process and that commuting really isolated students from each other. There was some feeling among the attritors that some of their friends at home "looked down on Middlesex; they were "kind of snobby." Activities in which former students could meet other people tended to be in the game room around the pinball machines, and other places where individuals could go without belonging to a special group (i.e., a student activity club).

Factor 3--Economics
One former student said that he had dropped out for financial reasons. He kept running out of money. His parents couldn't help him and financial aid was not sufficient.

A woman commented that the traffic was terrible. She spent more time in her car than on campus.

Factor 4--Family
One student said she came to the College solely due to parental urging; she did not really want to herself.

Factor 5--Advisors
One student mentioned that her advisor "turned her off;" he was not available during posted office hours nor willing to give her any kind of help. A comment was made that there should be a central place where anyone with problems could go. Another student said that he did go to his advisor for help and got it: help with scheduling, teachers, conflict with work. Still another student said that he avoided his advisor and preferred to go to Center IV for help. One woman said, "I did not see my advisor until it was time to withdraw from the College." One advisor was considered so good that everyone wanted to see him and, consequently, there was very little individual time available with this person.

A general comment was made that you needed somebody to "hang onto" at MCC, and that the College should provide more staff to provide that kind of support for students.

Factor 6--Studying
The Library was mentioned as a good place to study but there was a problem with people talking too loudly there.

Factor 7--Services

Former students had both praise for and complaints about College services. Some complaints concerned offices that would send students to other offices to get things done, transferring the responsibility. Other complaints were that staff and faculty did not always know what was going on or what were the correct procedures and that the Registrar's Office was usually so busy that you could not get anything accomplished or were given the run-around. Former students thought that scheduling should be handled individually. There were varying opinions about orientation; some thought it was worthless and others felt it was very important in learning where to go for help.

There was a feeling that the second year students in clubs were prone to use the first year students as fund raising persons.

They also said that nothing would bring them back to campus once they had gone home; even though some student activities looked good, they did not want to return.

Former students felt that a better complaint procedure should be outlined for students. They tended to study in both the cafeteria and the library. There was a feeling among the former students that you needed somebody to "hang onto" at MCC and more staff was needed to provide that comfort for students. They thought of advisors as people who were not very accessible and that they would have preferred to go to a place where they could walk in and find helpers, perhaps in Center IV. They used Center IV for career help and thought that the staff there really wanted to help them.

There was also a feeling expressed by a few that there was no one to talk to when you were having problems. One said, "I was not aware of counseling until it was time to withdraw." Another singled out a staff member, and said, "He was a very good

counselor and has a lot of understanding. If I had found him earlier I probably would have stayed because I would have found someone to talk to." The feeling among the group was that the College should not economize in support and counseling services, that they should cut activities first.

Factor 8--Image

Some former students said, "It would be nice if MCC were a four-year college." They would advise their friends and others to come here because it was a good school. Others said that friends who went to four-year colleges referred to the College as "a joke" and looked down on people who went here.

Factor 9--Motivation

Lack of motivation was reflected in the former students' reasons for leaving college. Women said that they couldn't relate to courses that were not in their majors and the temptation to leave campus was too great; it was too easy to "hop in the car and go." One female student admitted that the major problem was hers, she was not ready and had been persuaded to enroll by her parents. Her motivation appeared to be much greater now that she was not in college. The same student reported that now that she was not here, she missed school and knew now she wanted it. She wanted to try again and was determined to succeed the next time, but was also scared that the same thing might happen again.

Factory 10--Maturity

A lack of maturity was reflected in a former student's statements about not being ready to go to college, not being sure that she was ready, and then when she got here finding that she really wasn't ready. She had had a plan for herself to work first and then go to college. She was pressured into coming to college but felt she needed time first to grow up.

One female student stated that when she comes back, it will be as a part-time student. Another said, "Things didn't move fast enough; I wanted to get right into major courses and was frustrated by the other things I had to take."

Factor 11--Caring

One former student said, "Middlesex was a nice college; some teachers cared a lot, but some didn't care at all. Those that didn't care turned me off because I needed extra time." A man reported that some teachers had a personal touch and did seem to care.

Factor 12--Why They Came

Former students seemed to have the same kinds of reasons for coming as those who were still here. One man came because it was a two-year college, two others came because it was easy to get into and there was last minute admission. Two students came because it was close to home, one because it was inexpensive, two for the quality of the courses in their fields, one because her father had attended, one because of the good faculty reputation, and one because of the good withdrawal policy.

Factor 13--Why They Leave

The majority of these former students appeared to drop out because of academic reasons, as reflected in their comments about "too rough a load" and problems with a particular course. One woman said, "I would have preferred a lighter load at the beginning." A male student had trouble with chemistry; it seemed to him as if everyone else in the class was taking it for the second time, and he for the first. Another male student dropped out because his studies got too much in depth and he lost interest. A woman had a "rough" schedule and was turned off by one teacher who was not available for extra help. "Some teachers don't seem to care. They don't give

explanations, there isn't that extra help." A female student reported that she didn't see her advisor until it was time to withdraw. Only one student reported that he dropped out for financial reasons. He kept running out of money; his parents couldn't help him and financial aid was not sufficient.

Factor 14--Self-Image

The importance of a positive self-image for success at college was reflected in two statements by former students. One said, "The major problem I had here was my own, I was not ready for college, but I needed to recognize that myself." Another student recommended Middlesex to a friend not because she thought it would be the best thing for her, but for her to get a feeling of the college for herself as an individual.

Factor 15--Flexibility

One student said, "It's ridiculous to have so much time between classes." This student did not realize that classes could be switched around. A man reported that there was too heavy use of the electronics laboratories and might have been helpful to have had "open" laboratories, so that students could use the labs at other times than when they were scheduled for them.

NONTRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Factor 1 - Teachers

The nontraditional students' view of teachers was overwhelming in that they felt teachers took an interest in them, responded to them, and helped get them "turned on." They also felt that they would go to a favorite professor with personal problems and that the faculty did care about the students. They felt that teachers knew them better than counselors and that they would go to a professor that they felt at ease with. For example: "----(in Center IV) gave practical help with transfer but the teachers knew me better", was the comment of one student. One said, "It's great to have this relationship with teachers because you have so much access to talk with the instructors. You can get to know them as people. It's warm and homey." Students commented about teachers and departments. Generally they loved Psychology, they couldn't imagine better teachers than some in that department. Generally they thought the College had a high caliber of teachers.

Literature courses and English courses were regarded in a more negative way, however, and it was said, "Teachers in the Science Division won't lower their standards; they really strive for high quality in that department. It really helps when you go on to a four-year college, because it helps to be exposed to that quality." Students found that in microbiology, for instance, if you planned a career in that field the teachers took extra interest in you, but if you were just taking it to graduate you might get "written off."

It was felt that teachers interacted more with students who were majoring in their subject. One commented, "At Rutgers, you would be in a class of 200 or more, but here if you make an effort to show your interest you can have a relationship with your teachers." One student said, "I want to keep in touch with some of my professors, I have a good impression of them."

Factor 2 - Social Life

The nontraditional students had some complaints about the social life on campus, and had no really good things to say. Some suggestions for improvement were that more money should be put into Student Activities and that a pub on campus would greatly improve the social life. Another suggestion was that all sections of the cafeteria should be open at the beginning of the semester to encourage people to form in groups. It was felt too by at least four of the nontraditional students that if seniors helped in the orientation of freshmen it would facilitate the integration into the social life of the campus.

Factor 3 - Economics

One student said, "I'm a foreigner, I came to Rutgers originally but it was too expensive so I came here." Another said, "I attended in the early 70's but needed a few more credits for a degree. I came back here because it was cheap." Another thought that there would be a positive impact on economics for those who are adequately prepared if they would be able to test out of subjects, but that this information was often not known far enough in advance to plan for it.

Factor 4 - Family

There was only one comment regarding family from the nontraditional group. One student had a brother who had been here before and was oriented to the college by his brother. He showed him where to go, what to see and who it was important to see.

Factor 5 - Advisors

Advisors did not appear to have played an important part in the college life of the nontraditional students. One said he did not go to his advisor, another did not know he had an advisor, two students reported that they had been advised either insufficiently or wrongly. One referred to a wrong placement

in a language course as a result of advisor consultation. Several students remarked that the academic experience was not explained to them while another advisor did not understand the structure of the educational program. One noted that although it had not been explained, she was not sure that could it be really explained but had to be learned by experiencing it. One of the students suggested that there should be a letter sent out to students introducing their advisors and inviting them to make appointments for advising. Another student complained that her advisor was never there when she was, and consequently it was very difficult to make an appointment.

Factor 6 - Studying

Nontraditional students had some complaints about places to study. One who used the reading laboratory was asked not to use that as a study area. There was a feeling that students wanted to study on campus but they needed more quiet spaces. One said, "I would rather study in the Woodbridge Library than here. Our library isn't that good for studying or for finding materials." Another said, "The College seems to be taking away study spaces." There was a feeling that younger students did not study much but made a lot of noise. One person found that English class was a marvelous experience because students could study and work together in small groups and be supportive of each other.

Factor 7 - Services

The nontraditional students had mixed views about the services on campus. When they had problems, most of them hesitated about going to a counselor; they preferred to go to a favorite professor, to a teacher who might know them better than a counselor, or to their friends. One woman said, "I think the counselors are very good and are interested in the students." They would go to counseling for specific career problems, for places to transfer, or for job placement. One woman said,

"Advisement questions should not be handled in large groups but individually." She went to a counselor in Admissions with advisement questions.

There was one comment on the library. "It seems too much like a prison and I would prefer to study in the cafeteria." The registration process elicited a number of comments. Two people wished more flexibility in the choice of courses--for instance, photography and other courses that were restricted. One male student said that he was turned off by departments who tried hard to sell their courses. Another male student said, "I attended eight years ago; registration was a mess then, and it's still a mess." He learned to preregister by mail.

The nontraditional students were aware of student activities and many of them were involved. They felt that most students did know about activities, but that if the faculty would promote student activities by using them in classroom assignments, that more people would participate. There was a comment that students had so much work to do that there was not time to participate in activities. There were several comments about a pub on campus. Several said that they would come back to meet friends in the pub, but possibly not on a school night. Another said she would not come back to go to the pub. One man commented that some students are too immature to handle a pub on campus.

Factor 8 - Image

Most of the nontraditional students were pleased with the image of the College, at least their image of the College. One said he was going to buy a class ring, another said he was proud to be graduating from here. A woman liked the campus atmosphere; she thought it was a beautiful campus. Another male who had been out of high school for five years decided, after being

here, that this was not like high school but was in his view, a true college experience. Another male said, "I have attended Camden County College and Middlesex is much more like a college than Camden was."

A woman said, "A lot of people I know say that Middlesex is a second rate college, but in my experience, it's been really great." One had recommended MCC to a friend and another said, "It's important to form an allegiance to the College." A man said that his attitude has changed since he was here initially and he felt much more favorable toward the college now than he did before. There were only two comments that showed MCC as more comparable to high school--one had to do with the commuting part of the College because for this man, the word "college" meant living away from home. Another nontraditional male student came right out of high school with his friends and therefore felt it was like another year of high school.

Factor 9 - Motivation

Students varied quite a bit about whether they had had a good idea of what it took to succeed in college when they came here. Some did and some didn't, but they all agreed that it took a lot of motivation to succeed. Motivation seemed to be tied to having a goal. Being undecided was unmotivating, but it was a good experience to be allowed to venture into different courses and try them out. One student said she was very active and that it was her third year here. She started in one curriculum and changed to another and "loved every minute" of her studies. Also, having a goal and pursuing it seemed to be contagious; as one male said, "My future's looking bright for me now that I'm back in college. My friend decided to come, I think because he saw me getting ahead and that had something to do with it." Connected with motivation is

self-determination. Students felt that largely their academic orientation needed to be done on their own, and that they could acquire what they needed to continue their studies at another university and could work at a job too if they were goal-oriented. Another said, "It's not that I track down information because I'm a leader or anything; I do it out of desperation because I want to be here and I want to do well. Another student said, "In Nursing it's difficult to find your instructors but I'm a 26 year old woman, and I feel that you need to make a conscious effort to find things out, and that your background, age, and motivation are all related to how well you adjust to college." There was a feeling among nontraditional students that high school students were not really academically prepared or well motivated. It was also felt that students who left were not ready for college, that they needed to explore life more and perhaps not go to college right out of high school; that they would be more determined and more motivated if they explored a little more. For example: "I attended one and a half years and then went to work; I came back after two years of working because I didn't want to give up on my education." There was general agreement that one got out of college what one put into it.

Factor 10 - Maturity

The nontraditional students tended to be more mature and looked at the younger students as a group that did not really take advantage of the opportunity. There was general agreement that younger students showed a lack of direction. This was reflected in comments like, "Students would be too immature to handle a pub on campus," "Some of the students leave in the morning because they can't find a place to park," "Some young people pick a major just because it's easy, they don't take challenging courses, they take easy ones just for the grade." They felt that this was more typical of the younger persons who may have been here just to please their parents. Comments about the

nontraditional students themselves that reflected their degree of maturity were things like, "I knew that when I was mature I could go out and put myself into the college experience and get the most out of it." This woman had been out of high school for five years. Another man had been here before, didn't relate to teachers the first time, took some time out and now that he was more mature he was more at ease with the learning experience and got along better with the teachers. He said, "In high school, they only wanted to leave; here you need to do it yourself and I'm motivated to stay." Several comments reflected the ability to cope that comes with maturity. A man had learned to check with two or more people before taking any action. Another had an integrated goal so that she knew how to plan courses here that would transfer and how they would relate to a total career experience in music. Another knew the value of a degree, could appreciate it, has experienced life, and--through that experience--has come to value the College. Attitudes of the nontraditional students tended to be very favorable toward the college experience.

Factor 11 - Care

The nontraditional students mentioned this only once. Their feeling was that faculty do care about students.

Factor 12 - Reasons for Coming

The reasons for coming to the College were varied for the nontraditional student and included low cost and proximity to home (for several women the latter was a significant factor). One foreign student said that the College was close to his relatives and that was why he came. One female student said that other colleges would not take her because she had dropped out of high school. The College was recommended to another woman who worked at Perth Amboy Hospital. Two students said the curriculum was their reason for coming. One, an Engineering

Technology student noted that it was a good field for people with a two-year education to find a relevant job, and another used the Liberal Arts curriculum to explore careers.

Factor 13 - Reasons for Leaving (no information in this group)

Factor 14 - Self-Image

Most of the nontraditional students seemed to feel that the College provides the opportunity to develop, and that in the personal areas a lot of growth took place. One woman said that this was because the atmosphere allowed for that growth and another said, "When I first came as an older woman on campus, I felt uncomfortable but I found that the more I contributed, the more I felt a part of things and I am growing as a person." One comment was that evening school students seemed to be more dedicated. Two men found that they used the College as an exploring experience and through this process of exploring found out what they wanted to do and are now on a path leading toward a career. Both of them related this as a complicated process involving being in school, being confused, dropping out, doing other things and then coming back.

Factor 15 - Flexibility

The nontraditional students noted that the College should provide more flexibility in course availability. Two of them said that they would like to be able to take photography courses, which were not available to them. One said, "There should be more flexibility in choices for Liberal Arts students. I entered that curriculum because it appeared to be a flexible program but I found it much too structured when I actually got into it." A Physical Education major would have preferred more flexibility in that program too. One woman wished that the fall semester ended before the Christmas break and there was general agreement as to this.

HISPANIC STUDENTS

Factor 1--Teachers

There were four positive comments about teachers and four negative comments. All of these students except one were woman. One student said, "My chemistry teacher has really been behind me, and given me the incentive even though I am failing the course." She expected to repeat it, but wanted to get the same teacher. Another used her accounting instructor as a role model and felt very encouraged by her. Another felt that the teachers urged her to continue her education and she felt very encouraged by that. One male student said that every teacher was very helpful to him and gave extra help when it was needed.

The negative comments reflected some prejudice. One student felt that she was discriminated against by some teachers while another heard that CETA students in general were discriminated against by teachers. Another said, "Teachers are more willing to help good students than poor ones." and another said, "We need more Black and Hispanic counselors and teachers."

Factor 2--Social Life

Hispanic students felt generally positive about the availability of opportunities for social life on-campus. One female in the accounting tutoring program has made a lot of social contacts; she felt good about her ability to tutor. Another female went through every building on campus to see what services were available and developed her social life that way.

She said, "It helps to have someone who speaks my language, who has had some of the same experiences I have had." One student felt free to go up to anybody even in the cafeteria to ask for help. Another female reported, "School has given me the opportunity to become social and has given me the desire to be involved in my community as well." A woman reported that

she had not found any discrimination on campus, but said, "I may have been lucky." One reported that the cafeteria system seemed to reflect some social segregation. She said, "Cafeteria A is white, B is Black and Hispanic and in C people are studying."

Factor 4--Family

Families have had both positive and negative influences on Hispanic students' reasons for coming to college and their abilities to stay. One reported, "My mother came here, is doing well and that was one reason for my coming." Another reported that she wanted to come so that she could show her eleven year old daughter that it could be done. One female said, "A lot of students leave because they feel they are being put down at home, and some parents tell their students they can't make it because they are not white."

Factor 5--Advisors

Advisors got fairly high ratings from the Hispanic group. A male said "My advisor is terrific--both a good teacher and counselor." Another said she went to her advisor with problems and that the advisor would then talk to her teachers if necessary. Another said, "I only use my advisor to change classes, but he is available for that."

Factor 6--Studying

Studying was done in a variety of places with a variety of degrees of effectiveness. One student said she studied in CLC; another said "It's hard to concentrate in CLC," and that she used earphones to keep out the noise. Another said that she uses the bus, her home, and the Rutgers library for studying. Another reported that the downstairs of the library was like a morgue and was useful for studying.

Factor 7--Services

There were mixed feelings among Hispanic students about the effectiveness and receptiveness of certain service areas on campus. On the positive side, one woman felt that there was every opportunity to get help and to express oneself. A male student said, "I never had a problem with any office on campus." A female student reacted favorably to Open College, saying, "It's beautiful." Another felt good because when she didn't have money for books, she was given a loan by the Business Office. Two women felt that the tutoring services were a great help and the EOF Office received good marks for being a place they can go with problems where they could expect to get help. The Library did not receive such good grades. One male student said that the library did not have a good selection of books and there were too many duplicates of the ones they did have and that many were out of date. One female student said there were lots of periodicals, but never the ones she needed. Besides the comment about the downstairs of the library being like a morgue, another said that the upstairs of the library was too noisy for serious study.

The Financial Aid Office was reported by many as one which was discriminating against ethnic and racial groups. It was rumored that there was discrimination in the work study program, one person was given a "no" final answer to the financial aid application. One woman said that, "The last office I would go to on campus is the Financial Aid Office; it is not personal at all, they don't seem to care." She thought that the office should "be here to help and not to judge." Another woman found that her advisor was more helpful in explaining the financial aid form than were the people in the financial aid office.

A woman said that, "When I needed assistance in filling out my financial aid form, I had to wait two hours, and there are just too many students to be dealt with." There was unanimous laughter when one student said that the last office she would go to was the Registrar's office. One female student complained that, "Music in the College Center is too loud, and music should be provided for everyone's taste, not just the Rock lovers." But a male student rejoined by saying that if she belonged to the Radio Club she could influence what music would be played.

The Orientation process generally received poor marks from the Hispanic students. One student said that her invitation arrived on the day of Orientation and consequently she missed it. "Important things were left out at Orientation," according to one student who said, "it would be helpful to have a slide show of the campus to help people find their way around."

A student said it took her two hours to find out where Raritan Hall was, that there should be guides on the first day. Another said that there were no names on the buildings, so it was hard to know where you were. A student thought that, "It would help if students or graduates were brought in to do the Orientation, to tell you how to get involved in campus activities." Another said that she was never given an explanation of the abbreviations on her schedule, and never told how or when to buy books. There were also complaints about the distribution of information. According to one student, "The College paper should give more information on what's happening," and another said that, "The people at the information desk don't have any idea about what's going on."

There was general agreement among this group that it would be more helpful if the College provided more Black and Hispanic counselors and teachers. All these students said that it would be most helpful if the college would provide dormitories.

Factor 8--Image

The Hispanic students who responded to this factor seemed to be generally proud to be attending Middlesex County College, and one woman said that, "Even if this were an all-white college, I would have come for the opportunity."

Factor 9--Motivation

Hispanic women felt that motivation was the primary factor needed for success at Middlesex County College. One student said that she looked forward to coming every day, that she's really motivated. Others felt that many students defeated themselves. Another reported that, "In order to succeed, you have to ask a lot of questions and get nosey about things."

Factor 10--Maturity

The Hispanic students generally showed a high degree of maturity which was reflected both in their assertiveness in getting campus services and in their attitudes toward themselves and the College. One said that she had learned to accept criticism here. Another said that she had felt discriminated against at one point, but had decided that she was wrong, and that the teacher had reacted to her own attitude. Two others said that they had become very assertive in how they handled things. They looked throughout the college to find out what services were available and then took advantage of them. One said she felt free to go up to anybody on campus to ask for help. Another thought that some students were not mature enough to combine social life with academics, and that they did not have the ability to set priorities. Another student said that, "After taking my GED and bumming around a while, I decided that college would give me some career direction and self-direction."

Factor 11--Caring

A student reported that her first day here she felt, "As if I were in a new city. I felt completely lost, but now I have found a feeling of community on campus," what she called "a feeling of oneness."

Factor 12--Reasons for Coming

The reasons why these Hispanic students came to Middlesex seemed to reflect the mission of the College. Three students came because they needed developmental work; one had flunked the Nursing Board examinations twice and was now going through a CETA program, and another came because she was not prepared to go to Rider College. One reported that her guidance counselor suggested, "I shouldn't go too deep too fast because I might drown." Two came for economic reasons--for one it was the least expensive college around and for the other because transportation was available by bus. One wanted a communting college because she said, "I wanted to stay at home until my braces came off." One who had been out of high school for two years, thought that a smaller place than Rutgers would be a better place to start. Three said that family and friends were their primary motivation for coming. One said her mother had been here, and another wanted to show her daughter that college was achievable. Another came because a friend persuaded him.

Factor 13--Reasons for Leaving

One student reported that she felt a lot of students left because their home situations were not supportive of their college work. Another said that she believes students left because the College was too white and that, "They'll go to another college where they'll feel more accepted."

Factor 14--Self-Image

Hispanic students seemed to feel that many students had attitudes which defeated themselves, and that possibly the feelings of discrimination that one felt were from within and had no substance in reality. One woman reported that she enjoyed her courses but felt a great deal of pressure from tests. She thought that this could have been immaturity or a feeling that she was not confident. Another student said that she has gained a great deal of self-confidence from her feelings that the College has given her the opportunity to develop and to become involved in a group.

BLACK STUDENTS

Factor 1--Teachers

Black students reported that the attitude of teachers toward them varied from very positive to fairly negative. One Black foreign student felt that he got more help from the physics faculty than from any of his fellow students. A woman student reported that a faculty member asked her if she would help new students get to know their way around, and that this gave her a feeling of worth and value. Another said that, "Professors tend to overlook Black students because they are Black until they prove themselves as students."

Factor 2--Social Life

A feeling of isolation was reflected in one Black man's comment that, "I'm in Marketing and I don't get to know very many people." A feeling of belonging was reflected in a Black woman's attitude about a club that was having financial problems arranging a dance but she did feel a part of that particular club. There was an overwhelming feeling among the Blacks that they were coming into an atmosphere where the expectation was that they would not succeed academically. This was reflected by a female who commented that, "When I got an A, it seemed so surprising to the other students, that a guy came up to me and asked who I cheated from because I had gotten a good grade. After that, he wanted to study with me and copy from me."

Another female said, "Even if I get a higher grade than the average white student, they might have thought it was a miracle or that I cheated and that's how I did better." Another man reported that he went to class and the whites did not sit near him because they thought he was "Black and dumb." Sometimes he said, "I feel very alone in the class if I am the only Black." But he said that when the questions were asked and he answered them, then the other students tried to be friends with him. A

woman said that she believed that to be disadvantaged meant that you were not able to learn as well as whites. There was a very forceful statement from a Black man who wondered, "Why should I have to face prejudice. I am paying to go here. I shouldn't have to change; white students are not forced to change."

Factor 3--Economics

Financial situations were reflected in two comments, one by a student who came by bus and said, "It's fine because it only takes fifteen minutes, but the irregularity of the bus schedule is a real disadvantage." Another student said he felt that, "It's important for me to go to school now because in order to get the job I want, I will have to, and it will pay off in the end."

Factor 4--Family

There was only one comment related to family among the Black students. A woman reported that, "I decided to go to school because of family presssure. I really just wanted to go to work."

Factor 5--Advisors

There were two comments dealing with advisors among the Black students, both slightly negative. One Black student reported that, "Advisors seem to be too busy. I didn't know what the right thing was to do always, and I felt that if my advisor could help more, it would have been better." Another student said that, "Advisors are not enough the way they are--there needs to be more orientation to the college and advisors could help in this."

Factor 6--Study

One Black student reported that, "In each of my classes, if I read and do my work regularly, I can hang in there."

Factor 7--Services

There was general agreement among the Black students that some kind of central information network would be very helpful, particularly for them. One suggestion was that, "An information center, it doesn't matter who staffs it, as long as the information is correct would be an excellent idea." One other female student said, "Student mailboxes for announcements would be good. The communications through posters is just not effective." One male student said, "We should develop student leaders on the divisional level, and they could give you straight talk about what's going on." Another male student said a less formal information network would be good. Two comments related to the need for services in the tutoring area. One student said, "I tried to catch up after having been out a week and was given tutoring help by a counselor in Center III."

Another said that he thought students in trouble should know that tutoring help was available. One student said, "A swimming pool would be extremely helpful. I feel that the activities and clubs are good for people in groups, but I would prefer something that could be done on an individual basis, like swimming." A woman complained that, "Providing services from the police to be at a dance cost our club $75 each for two cops. I felt that it should be paid for out of student activity fees which had already been assigned." Another student had a complaint about police, "Who would stop me for a minor violation and then go and do the same thing themselves. It seems that the cops on campus have a double standard."

Factor 8--Image

The image of the College was reflected in different ways. It appeared to Blacks that the "street image" of the college was that people thought it to be "The only place that would take you, because it's close, or it was the only choice you had." But they also said that, "When you get here, you have to

work." The image, then, that these students were projecting to other people, to their friends and their families was that, "It's a wonderful place to get an opportunity. You can get aid, and you can get a good academic education, and it's a good stepping stone to a four-year college." They liked to bring people to campus to show them that it was just like any other college, maybe just a little smaller. Several students reflected their images of the College. saying, "It's good in particular curriculums, like Business and Computer Science."

Factor 9--Motivation

Motivation among Black students was universally reflected in the feeling that they came as second class students, that they were perceived that way and that this feeling of prejudice made them more motivated. A male student said, "I feel I had to prove myself, both to the instructor and to the other students." Another male said, "I had to drive harder; I feel I'm going to pass this class for sure. I wanted to come to MCC while I still had the ambition to go to college."

Two women reflected that they felt they were seen as somewhat inferior students. One said, "In a way it's a plus because you have to work hard and, once you show your worth, you are accepted." A male student reflected that, "It takes courage to come here." Another reported that, "The attitude of felt inferiority makes you react and some of us try to prove ourselves."

Factor 10--Maturity

Maturity was reflected in the Black students' attitudes both toward the importance of an education and in the way they adjusted to the prejudice they felt. One man stated that he needed to go to school for the economic rewards, that it was important for him to be in school now, and that he had been out of high school for five years. One felt it had beem good to

work a little bit before starting to school. She did that and she was feeling good about it. Another woman reflected maturity in her ability to express her opinion, even if she wasn't asked and said, "It's important to show maturity that way."

As far as the prejudice issue went, two Black females felt that college was good preparation for the outside world. "Attitudes are going to be the same there, and you learn to deal with them in college and then you can handle them better."

Factor 11--Caring

The Black students of the group showed a great deal of feeling about each other which was reflected in their comments both in relation to people outside of campus, to their friends and to the support network that they formed on campus with other students. Five women reported that they have influenced friends to come here, that MCC is a really good school that these friends should try it, have brought materials to them and encouraged them to come to campus to see what it's like. Another woman had a broader interest in seeing people get off the street and into jobs, and encouraged people to pursue their goals through college. One other brought her neighborhood friends, "To see that Middlesex is a college." Another had offered a friend a place in her home until she got an apartment, and urged her to come to college and take advantage of its opportunities. On campus the Blacks reported that they would help another Black, would share notes, and would show them how to get through a particular class. Another had been anxious to help other students get to know their way around campus and was very pleased about being able to help them get oriented. A Black student said that teaming up in her department, "Showing the new ones the ropes and helping other people get through", was important to her.

Factor 12--Reasons for Coming

Reported reasons for coming to Middlesex are because it was local, because a brother went here, because "People I worked with went here," because some felt it was the only place that would take them, and because one said, "My family said I needed to go."

Factor 14--Self-Image

It seemed to be difficult for Black students, particularly women to separate their own self-images from the images they felt others had of them. One said, "I don't think we should have to prove ourselves just because we are Black. We deserve to be accepted for our own individual selves. My good academic preparation can be affected by attitudes and feelings of others. I want to be treated fairly." There was a feeling expressed by one woman that, "It's hard for me to accept an average performance from myself, and I feel I need to prove something. It is easier for white students to accept average performances."

FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION

Factor 1--Teachers

The attitudes and expectations of the instructors were, they felt, probably factors in student attrition. The way the work was presented by the instructor, the way the instructor explained could "unhinge" some students or motivate others. A suggestion was made that faculty could be more visible to each other and to every student, and that high risk students could be scheduled for certain faculty and advisors who were prepared for them. Another faculty member responded, "What kind of special preparation could faculty have that would better prepare them to handle high risk students?" And they wondered, "With open registration this year, will the most exciting teachers have their classes filled quickly by the most aware and brightest students?"

Factor 2--Social

The group focused on questions like, "What outside reinforcements do successful students have that unsuccessful students do not have? Was it a parent, a spouse? What about the student who was emotionally alone?--The student who is emotionally alone seemed to be the one who dropped out."

Factor 3--Economic

This group was convinced that the economics of inflation were important factors. "Students needed to kick in to support themselves or their family. This trend should be looked into--was our constituency meek in this regard?" Also, they asked, "What can we do about economic conditions or personal, psychological factors? Probably very little." It was noted that those who worked 25 to 30 hours a week had greater problems, and students did not understand the amount of study necessary to be successful here. Finally, transportation difficulties were also often reasons for student attrition.

Factor 4--Home and Family
Being alone, having no supportive system might have been problems and the staff needed to be aware of this factor. "Home pressure isn't there now as it was when I went to college," said an administrator, "They are coming, not because of their parents' pressure, but because they want to."

Factor 5--Advisors
The big problem in the system, they felt, was that students did not meet with or get assigned to an advisor before registration. They were convinced that, "Our system compares well with other colleges, but is not good enough. We do have an in-place advisory system in quantity. It needs to get better;" that is, "Let an advisor keep an advisee for as long as the student is here." An observation was made that, "Only about 25 percent of the students ever see their assigned advisor, perhaps because they are not compelled to see them." Also the person a student contacted before choosing courses and similar projects was more likely to be a dean, department chair, or another student, rather than an advisor. The opinion was expressed that students left because they did not get sufficient academic advisement to do with their programs and futures plans.

Factor 6--Study
No Comment.

Factor 7--Services
This group offered, "We have nowhere near enough quantity or--quality of counseling for this kind of student body." They also felt that students were surprised by the amount of work that was required to get through, and support was necessary for this process, also there was need of better orientation to academics as such. One asked, "How can we prepare in September for orienting the new students?" They noted that the Health Division did academic orientation in the Spring for their new students, but Business and Liberal Arts did not have that

opportunity since their groups are not identified so early. As a possible solution they wondered, "Could this be done on the first or second day of class? Other questions they felt important were, "Why do students feel the need or compulsion to take 18 to 20 credits a semester, to make it out of here in two years?" "Is this possibly an economic need?" "Can our counselors discover this factor?" "Could academic orientation be accomplished during the first week of class during class time?" "Is this really a nonacademic function?"

Factor 8--Image

Concern was expressed about the effect of open admission on the College's image. The consensus seemed to be that open admission does not mean that students could enter without prerequisites. Two-thirds of the students needed prerequisites to enter their first semesters. Also, one faculty member suggested, "We could improve our image if we were affiliated with a university as a two-year branch campus."

Factor 9--Motivation

Could the problem have been the lack of career goals, no commitment to academic or career self-development, or lack of feeling that faculty care about their success? Again the observation was made that only 25 percent of the students saw their advisors, and they felt that this could have helped to develop motivation.

Factors 10 & 11--Maturity and Care

No comment on either of these.

Factor 12--Why They Come

Faculty and administrators felt that the students were coming because they wanted to. Other factors were cost, location, and "graded entry level". One said, "They are coming to see what they want to study, also it is only a two-year period, and they may form a new goal after they start here." The statement was

also made, "I don't think students come here with the objective of graduating. They come with friends, they want a cheap place to start, and they want to test themselves in higher education. Also, you can come here on a short-term commitment and see if it works out for you." Finally, "Some students with personal difficulties may see going to college as a panacea, but then find it to be also very demanding and stressful."

Factor 13--Why They Leave

"I think they need more counseling on programs, future, and so on,--
this often doesn't get done until they are in academic trouble," according to one faculty member. Another suggested that we should focus on the students who leave after the first semester, following failure, first semester "N's" and "W's".

Another mention was made about economic conditions and personal-psychological factors and the fact that one could do very little about them. There was also a concern that potential attrition could be built in, right in high school, by poor preparation, but Basic Skills testing could help. The organizational system was said to "give students an opportunity to fail" whereas, failure should not be anticipated or expected. A more positive approach would be to create courses that taught fundamentals, placed students in appropriate levels, and one could then expect most students to be successful and help them to be so. One countered, "I think students are given ample opportunity to succeed via the "N" and "W" grade," but several others disagreed with this; they observed that the drop in and out again phenomenon seemed to be accepted by a significant number of students. Those who needed to prove their academic promise and then go on after one year had plans in mind and this was really not attrition.

Factor 14--Self-Image

Faculty and administrators felt that the traditional students might be more vulnerable to feelings of failure which impacted in initial days of college attendance. To juggle college, work, family, economics, and so forth required a good self-image. To be able to adjust to changes toward more successful attitudes and habits seemed necessary. One administrator reported that "high school guidance counselors need to be academically oriented to Middlesex also. They say it is an easy school. If you can't go anywhere else, go to MCC." The external image of the College might have been low in this sense, and also the self-image of the students attending here for exactly the same reason.

Factor 15--Flexibility

"The DCE mathematics student was not significantly different in ability from the full-time day student according to my study. I was in California recently and, there, the part-time student is 80 percent of the total population. I wonder if this isn't the trend of the future," one faculty member reported. Others agreed that the DCE students or those full-time Open College students who were willing to choose evening restricted courses might actually be working people who had goals and more motivation. They would be frustrated by our new policy of registration. It was questioned if the College focus was not too much on the full-time student. Part-time students might seem to be a "less significant dollar" and it, therefore, seemed more important to keep the full-time student. Also, it was noted that the evening curriculums seemed to be attracting more students to mini-courses and certificates "because they got a sense of achievement from getting a piece of paper". They wondered, "How does the DCE and day split schedule affect the student?" The group noted that DCE was now restricting some of its course offerings to part-time students only, not allowing the day student to register for certain DCE courses in certain major areas, and predicted the College will see more of

this. It was questioned whether this decreased convenient scheduling for all students in both evening and day classes. It was suggested that open day and DCE schedules would make evening students feel a part of the College and vice versa, "all part of the family", making it convenient for some full-time students to work in the afternoon and take some of their courses in the evening. Another person expressed concern that, "The restrictions in DCE enrollments in major courses concerns me insofar as OC students are concerned. They cannot now presently take some major courses that are in DCE, and therefore, cannot explore or pursue a major where it may be appropriate. That may cause frustration and attrition eventually." Finally, several people agreed that it was very common to see the part-time student around for five or six years. They were more mature and had goals and maybe it was wrong to have such a split between the evening and the day schools because the part-time student was seen as very persevering. "Could we get them into the mainstream?" was one person's question.

VIGNETTE STUDIES

These studies describe separately each of the student groups, as well as faculty and administration, as reflected in their respective group interviews. The characteristics which made them distinct had been open to much discussion and even speculation as to degrees of differences between them and indeed what made these differences so. Now, as part of this research, it became possible to define the identity of each group through abstraction of interview data which accurately reports the flavor, spontaneity and character of each without relation to the definition of categories--which in fact were developed in a later part of the process.

These students mentioned the financial squeeze and the fact that the money they accrued during the summer between semesters would quickly fade in the fall and, veterans' benefits paid to them as they got here notwithstanding, many of them felt the pinch to the extent that some of them were obliged to leave. Others, however, were openly appreciative of parental and family assistance which enabled them to persevere.

It was noted that all seven veteran students in this interview group were enrolled in transfer programs: Science Transfer, Criminal Justice, and Liberal Arts, and that they had the perception to see the need and desirability for a baccalaureate degree.

They did not seem in the slightest bit daunted by the prospect of weaving their way through the bureaucracies of Middlesex and future senior institutions to achieve their goals--a good example of deferred gratification at work.

All of these students attested to a strong degree of moral support from home and family, in many instances their parents. As one person put it, "You need to get kicked in the butt from time to time and I'm glad to have my parents do this for me so that if I lose sight of my goals they can be very helpful in getting me back on the track." There seemed to be no resentment on the part of veterans towards parents who were

helping them--this as opposed to the student emerging directly from high school, seeking to establish his/her independence who might quite bitterly resent parental involvement in their lives, even including help.

Veteran students appeared to be positively disposed towards the faculty in general and especially high marks were accorded to the Biology Department who were willing to be there for long hours to give extra help.

The students were asked the question, "What does it take to succeed here?" and the general response was, "knowing what you want and going after it." These students did not find the coursework here so difficult as they had thought it might be, and in observing the problems of some of the younger students, they said that what the younger students, tended to do was drop a course if it got difficult so that by a few weeks into the semester the classes were down to a fraction of the enrollments they had started out with.

They were asked the question, "Do you think the College is interested in you?" and a typical response was, "No, I'm just another number." On the other hand, one veteran student said that while he felt the College was not collectively interested in him and his future, both his instructors and counselors in Center IV had been particularly helpful to him.

Some of these students mentioned "hitting some turbulence" at the registration point during late admission/registration but, typical of this kind of student, they sailed right through it without any real damage being done, or any bad memories. They were asked to whom they would turn in the event of trouble and they said they would approach their classroom teachers and if these people were not able to help them solve the problem, they would certainly refer them to somebody who could. The substance

of what these veteran students were saying was--where there is a "will there is a way", and that somewhere there exists a SOP (standing operating procedure) for the resolution of all problems. One student said there is always a way to find out the answer to everything and it was very clear that, with their particular backgrounds in the service, these people have learned to deal with bureaucracy in a smooth fashion. They gave the impression that nothing was going to deter them from achieving the goals they have established for themselves.

They were undaunted by the fact that their faculty advisors were generally hard to locate, and simply bypassed them by going to the deans, department heads, counselors, or teaching faculty--in other words, "what worked was right" for them apart from the prescribed channels, and these students evidenced having become college-wise very quickly.

This whole conversation was conducted in a cheerful and businesslike fashion; there was no apparent animosity or anger towards the institution for imposing roadblocks--rather these veterans simply found efficient ways to get around them and keep on moving. As to image, several of them said they had thought before coming here that a two-year college was a second-rate kind of place but, upon getting here, they felt that they were actually achieving something and that being a graduate of a two-year college was better than being a dropout at the end of the sophomore year in a four-year institution. On the whole, student veterans had very little fault to find with MCC. One said, "I was a griper in the service, and I came here preparing to gripe, but I really can't find that much to complain about."

A helpfully candid group, imbued with a staying power which might well serve as optimum to all others who attend here, these veterans appreciated the concept of this interview project, "provided it is followed up."

Traditional Students

(Traditional students are defined as those who attended college directly following high school graduation)

As to difficulty, one student expressed a preference for being made to do the work but the others appreciated being responsible for their own destinies. In terms of academic preparation, they felt they were ready to handle the level of work in their respective majors.

Despite the fact that these students were survivors and successful, they have experienced some problems with the institution's bureaucracy. For instance, they have approached their classroom instructors for help and the instructors have sent them on to the advisors who they then could not find and, as a result, the problem simply did not get solved. What was pointed up here was a lack of persistence in the students in seeking help, although in class activity, they seemed to have been reasonably successful. They conveyed the impression that they knew what has happened to them but that they did not know why.

For sources of help, these traditional students preferred to go to a classroom instructor even though they may have had problems in locating some of them during office hours. They were generally able to find out of their four, five, or six instructors, one to whom they could turn for fairly consistent help and this was obviously in preference to the elusive advisor or the more available counselor in Center IV.

These traditional students stressed quite strongly that they had made up their own minds to come here, that they were not influenced by family or other people, such as guidance counselors.

They showed signs of having achieved independence from their homes and families which is so typical of those going to college in the Freshman year. They also remarked that MCC was like high school and, at this response, several of the interviewers asked them, "Is this a negative or positive point?" They replied, "Oh, positive, for sure," because they felt that the small classes and fairly intimate, friendly atmosphere they encountered were good and it was interesting to note that for over ten years we have heard this comment that MCC was like high school and taken it as a derogatory observation on the part of those who said it--and most likely this has not been the case at all.

Their reactions when they got here were pretty much centered around the fact that the work was harder than in high school and, as to orientation, there was a newness to the college scene; they were surprised and pleased to find they could get to know their faculty virtually as friends and that there did not exist the authoritarian relationship which had pertained in high school. Their senses of responsibility have been stretched in a positive fashion by course syllabi and course outlines which told them what was expected of them for the entire semester and that it was not, as in high school, a day-to-day situation.The students found this a bit awesome to begin with but when they adjusted they found they could live with it and that it was mind-broadening. One woman said she went regularly to her dean or chairperson for assistance and another commented she would go to Center IV for problems that fell outside the realm of the classroom.

Amazingly, this group found that there was no office on campus that bugged them to deal with. They have had pleasant and productive exchanges with all the departments they needed to do business with. They felt the College was interested in them and their future, without any further comment. They thought

- that attending Middlesex made them "feel like college students." They talked about jobs and other involvements which might keep them from being here and some appeared to be envious of their friends who were making money at their full-time jobs. But they also noticed that their friends who were working tended to have "kind of crummy" positions and derive very little satisfaction from the jobs as such, whereas these students believed that with their college degrees and experience, they should be able to get much better jobs after they graduate.

The factor that they disliked most about the process of being MCC students was commuting. When asked the question, "Is there anything that would force you to leave the institution before graduating?", all they said was they were kind of determined to stay here, that they liked it and couldn't think of anything that would drive them out.

This group stated fairly vehemently that you had to "put out" and "know what you wanted" to do in order to be successful. The people who failed or didn't make it were those who did not come of their own choice, unlike these interviewees who say they attended of their own initiative. They advised: "Don't fall behind;" "Do everything you're capable of doing;" "Stay with it."

Mature Women

(Mature women are defined as
those who are 25 years of age or older.)

"What can students do," they asked, "When we are in a core course of a major, taught by a person with whom we simply cannot relate?" What are the options? Several of these students commented that they were apparently discriminated against because they were attending under the aegis of some federally funded program and not paying their own way.

One of the students observed that her initial impression before she actually enrolled was that the faculty at a two-year college would by definition be below-par kinds of teachers in the classroom; but when she arrived, she learned this was not only not so, she found them to be excellent.

Another student made the comment that she had one instructor at night and the same person in a subsequent semester during the daytime and this faculty's attitude towards his evening students was one of respect; and in his day classes, which were predominately with younger students, it was one of apparent contempt.

Evening instructors seemed to be more cognizant of the fact that the student had a "real life outside the classroom," whereas the daytime instructors acted as though the student had no other life save that of being a student. Another woman observed that one of her faculty spoke in the classroom with a negative attitude toward the College and indicated he wished he weren't here; rather that he were at a four-year college.

Another noted money problems which cause people to leave, loans and other forms of financial aid not arriving on time, obliging the person to drop out and seek employment in order to "stay alive." The same person had a vehicle breakdown and had to resort to hitchhiking because public transportation didn't run from her home to the College.

One mentioned the difficulty of getting along with younger students whose "life styles were so entirely different in virtually every respect."

Another woman said that, as she set out to do her nursing degree, she figured it would take her six years to complete the two-year program. For her this seemed like a perfectly normal, routine way to approach it; and, parenthetically, this was considered as attrition every time she left here and then came back in again whereas, in reality, she has not been an attritor at all; it was the way she has had to go about it.

These women stated that, as older students, they were in college because they wanted to be, not because somebody had told them that they should. They knew what they wanted to do and they intended to stick it out and it is ironic that this kind of highly motivated person could hit a roadblock in the form of some instructor who looked down on them because they were funded by an outside program.

A student who had been out of high school for fifteen years said that in getting to Middlesex she "didn't know how to study, didn't know what to do", and finally found it very chafing and difficult to "get back into it". Also this person felt setbacks to be major even though they were not be nearly so great in reality.

Another student allowed that if she were going to leave for a reason to do with courses, she would simply fade away without making any fuss about it because first, she didn't want to get anybody into trouble; and second, she didn't think the College was really interested in doing anything about her problems. One got the sense, too, that this student recognized academic freedom in all of its ramifications and realized that there was little that anyone who heard the complaint could do about it.

When this group was asked, "Who do you turn to for help?", over half mentioned they had seen counselors and about the same number said they turned to their advisors--and that they had had varying degrees of difficulty in finding the latter. There was a widely expressed opinion that faculty advisors were sometimes difficult to reach, that they had to be tracked down in their classrooms or sought out at home because they frequently did not keep their office hours. But the students all got letters from their advisors announcing what the office hours were to be, which they appreciated, until such time as they tried to make good on them.

This group found the study load pretty heavy, at times overwhelming, especially, those students who were in health programs. And one of these commented she felt that Nursing should not be open to applicants coming right out of high school because they were simply not equipped to handle the very, very, heavy amount of work that was involved in this program.

These mature women said that in order to succeed at Middlesex, one could not let down at all--it was necessary to keep working constantly with, at some points, real peak volumes. Some ironic comments were made about a stress unit in one of the nursing courses, and these women observed, "We don't need to study stress at all because we are living it."

These students expressed a feeling of being involved in the institution, in their class work, as they never had been in high school. They felt their maturity kept them interested in their academics and at least the equal of the other people in their classes, which was a sensation they had not known before. They were asked the question, "Do you feel the institution is interested in you?" and the answer was "Yes, it is a warm and caring place."

Commenting on the difficulties imposed by being a parent and having to cope with children's problems, such as sickness, and still meet scholastic obligations, notably, clinical days in nursing, a student suggested that the faculty were somewhat insensitive to her personal life needs.

Talking about relationships with faculty, they said that they did not have the time to get involved in a deeper sense with their faculty but would probably like to if they did have the time. And one added out of understanding perhaps for the instructors, "Gee, each has so many students and there is only one of them so we don't really want to spread them too thin."

The sum of this then was that Middlesex came across as a college as opposed to a university. Students have mentioned that the image of MCC as they have felt it, seen it, and lived it has been very positive and it was one of going to college. It was "up there," as they put it, in terms of transfer and the job market. Most of them have known successful MCC graduates and did not in any way exhibit bad feelings about coming here. These people said that when they were in high school, others, both faculty at the schools and primarily their own peers, referred to Middlesex as a "glorified high school", that "nobody in their right mind would go there," and so on--but that by the time they got around to going to college, they had already heard many good things about this institution and had no qualms about coming here.

In spite of what they perceived as "hassles," most people were sufficiently determined to pursue their goals and said they will not walk away or drop out.

The question was asked, "Does any particular office on campus bug you?" and apart from the observations concerning Financial Aid noted above, comments were made about the Registrar's Office, particularly the front desk where the staff appeared to be very impolite and most anxious to get rid of their clients. One said that they "bark at you." Another one added, "if you drop and run, you're O.K." A few statements were made about the belligerent attitude of the police and objections to the fact that they carried guns.

On the whole, a group which was proudly bitter about many of the experiences which have made up their tenures here--but very positive about the totality of attending Middlesex.

Former Students

An older former student commented that the thing he liked about the College the most was the fact that Dr. Chambers, our founding president, used to walk around from one building to another and in general make himself available to hear students' comments, complaints, suggestions and the like. This student also observed that the College was a nicer place in the early days when it was still small and when he had the feeling that everybody was "trying hard to make it work". He got the impression that, as the years went by, either the faculty and staff simply did not try as hard as they had then, or the place "just got so big" that it was impossible to achieve the kinds of results which had been attained before.

One of the students who had been in Science Transfer said that people had made fun of him for coming here. He noted that most of his friends went to fairly prestigious colleges and that he was "mocked out" for going to a community college. He allowed that Middlesex was not his first choice and went on to say that he had been here several times, alternating between college and jobs.

A woman who had been in Medical Laboratory Technology said that everyone was friendly and most of the teachers were really good with one notable exception, her chemistry teacher, who apparently read the lessons out of a textbook to the students, quizzed them on the content and left without being available for questions. This instructor also was frequently late for class. She said that her lack of success in this course, resulting directly from poor teaching and a bad relationship with the teacher, precluded her going on into part two and that

she therefore was out of sequence in her major and so felt obliged to withdraw from the institution. She said that when the time came to do this she went through the withdrawal procedure impatiently listening to the people who were trying to persuade her to stay, having fully decided that she was not going to. She also said that she intended to return to college but that she 'would not come back to Middlesex," based on her unfortunate experience with one teacher.

She said her employer had told her that Middlesex' education was "a joke" and "a waste of time" and that the employer, a pharmaceutical company, would take only people with bachelor's and higher level degrees in science for professional or semi-professional positions. The students said that they would and have suggested Middlesex to their friends with the admonition that they are going to have to "put out and work hard", and that it was much more difficult than in high school.

The Science Transfer student said that chemistry was his downfall, that it was a difficult course and that he was not able to get adequate assistance from the teacher.

A former Electrical Engineering Technology student brought out a good point that the equipment was in such heavy use that he was never able to get additional time with it himself when he felt that he needed it.

Comment was made that there was insufficient counseling assistance on campus--in other words, there were too few counselors. The same student also suggested that department heads carefully look at the grade results of their instructors' sections, and when an inordinate number of failures and "Ds" were recorded, that the instructor in question be investigated--in other words, this kind of instructor must have been doing something wrong if his or her teaching brought about so many unsatisfactory results.

Very high marks were handed out to a marketing professor. The student said that when he first got him as an instructor, other students said, "you got the craziest guy in the whole college," but he said he "came to love him" because he said he was an involved, interested and stimulating instructor.

Students were asked whether the assigning of a second year student to them as a peer counselor would have helped and the Medical Laboratory Technology student said that this happened in her major, that the second year students were smug and condescending and tended to treat the first year students as though they didn't exist. She said that she encountered tremendous difficulty in chemistry not only because of the instructor but because the content was very hard, and as was noted earlier, she said that falling behind in this course and ultimately having to drop it threw her out of sequence and the notion of getting back into sequence which would have involved staying out for a whole semester and not resuming her major until a year later, was abhorrent to her, so she left. Students in this group who encountered difficulty in one or two courses allowed it to become paramount; that is they allowed this problem to force them to leave--whereas other students, notably those who were more mature, have overcome their difficulties and persevered. These people were surprised and pleased that the current study was being undertaken because of the institutional concern for student welfare that this study implied.

There was difference of opinion on the need for orientation, some saying it was useless, others saying it was very important. One student reminded us there was a need for people to know to whom they can turn if they had problems. She went on to say that she really didn't want to go to college right out of high school--rather, her parents obliged her to go by saying that they had not been able to when they were young and that they really wanted her to do so, and right now.

When she got here, she found she was simply not ready for college, as she had suspected she would not be. She said she had a mathematics teacher who was "terrible"--he told the class, "You have a book in front of you and if you read it and understand it, I don't have to teach you." She said she needed additional attention and help in the course because mathematics this was never her strong subject and when she couldn't get it, when the instructor "absolutely refused to help me", she got discouraged. This was one of the major considerations in her leaving. The student found that the instructor did not care for her as an individual. She said, "I came expecting you all to care, and you don't all care." She went on to say that many of the teachers really tried to provide as much help as they could, given their large ratio of students.

She also had very high marks for a counselor in Center IV Services. She said it was a shame she hadn't become more aware of him earlier on, having just met him at the time she was withdrawing. She said, "I would have stayed just for him." and added, "College is a place where you can't do it by yourself, you have to have somebody with you."

The student said she really liked it here in many ways, and one of the ways was that it was informal, meaning that it was friendly and sometimes hard to tell teacher from student because of the good relationships that seemed to exist between them. There was a lack of the rigidity she had expected she would find. She said that all her instructors, except for the one mentioned, were very direct and "spoke right to you instead of over you" and that Middlesex was not as demanding as she thought college would be. Over and again, she kept saying "the problem was my problem" and that she simply was not ready for college and that she came "just to please my parents."

She said "you definitely need someone to hang onto while you're here" and that as the College is growing, "you'll need more counseling" staff to whom students can cling. Her perception was "The people you're supposed to go to just don't seem to have the time for you."

She said she'd been unaware of the College's student services at first but when she needed to change her schedule, she went to the Registrar's Office where the people were "going out of their minds," she said, running around "like chickens without heads," trying to accomplish their assigned tasks.

This student said she withdrew from college once and she was quite concerned lest this happen again, that she was really trying hard to make sure that when she does come back that it won't happen again. The possibility that she might once more fail in college is like a spectre that is haunting her. She thought this may be the reason a lot of people don't come back to college after leaving the first time. She said, "I really want it but I'm kind of scared it might not work."

Nontraditional Students

(Nontraditional students are defined as those who did not enter college directly following high school gradutation)

Two of the students mentioned that they had been here before, in the early '70's, and left because they couldn't "get it together" and now they were back, in different curriculums, doing dean's list level work. The difference they explained, was that they themselves have grown up. They knew they were here because they wanted to be and not because somebody else, like a parent for example, made them come by saying, "It's either get a job or go to college."

Another student said that when he left high school five years ago, he felt that going to Middlesex would be like going into thirteenth grade but when he got here he said it was "in no way." He said he found it to be a "real college" and that he was pleasantly surprised.

Another said when he came here several years ago on his first trip, that it was like thirteenth grade. His entire high school senior class had moved en-masse "across the river to MCC". He observed that many of them who came with him were here because they simply had no other plans--they didn't know what to do. He commented further that he then felt the faculty who taught him had a cold and disdainful attitude towards the younger student. He found that the difference in his educational experience was that he was now more mature and able to accept the help, the concerns and interests of his faculty whom collectively he had previously regarded so negatively. He noted that he has formed a number of lasting friendships with members of the faculty and was somewhat reluctant to transfer on to a four-year college (even though he knew that this was what he must do) because he was concerned that he will not find the kinds of attention, help and support he has found here; but nonetheless, he will do this and because of his maturity he was quite certain that he will overcome these difficulties in his future institution.

It was interesting to note that both of the students who had been here earlier and then came back were members of their respective divisional councils and they pointed out they believed that this involvement was one of their primary reasons for staying here. These people both felt they were much more able to put up with such bureaucratic problems as they encounter here because they had a sense of purpose and direction and they were willing to go through anything to achieve their particular goals now that they could see them with more clarity than when they were here before.

One of the second-timers with us stated he was proud of this institution and proud to be a part of it. He added that he was going to go down to the bookstore and buy a class ring and he added that he will miss MCC because of the invaluable and worthwhile experience he has gained here, an experience, by the way, which he said he could not possibly have achieved as a person coming right out of high school as he was the first time.

Most of the students observed that while they may have been spoon-fed in high school, you had to really dig for the information necessary to be successful in the courses at MCC and this process called for a high degree of maturity and self-starting which obviously this group felt that its members have.

Students were asked if they knew why they were going to college when they came here, and one of the people who had been here twice said his first time around it was, "No." In fact, he even changed his curriculum three times before he enrolled here. He said one of the primary reasons he dropped out before was the structure of the Liberal Arts major which he had thought would be "a chance to sample" many areas--yet, in reality, he found out that he was stuck with, as he termed it, "the humanities" and that his imagination and interest was not sparked by

this limited assortment of courses which he was obliged to take in order to get a degree. When he came back, by the way, he went into one of the Business majors.

The comment was made that many of the young people coming out of high school and going directly to college were doing so because they were coerced into it by their parents, whereas, they themselves might have preferred to get jobs. For others of them, going to college was preferred to getting a job as it appeared to be the easier path. These kinds of immature students who turned off and left college in substantial numbers were contrasted by the speaker with the type exemplified by this group of nontraditional students who "hang in" and were motivated to know pretty much when they went to college--later, rather than right out of high school--what they wanted. They, therefore, persevered and achieve their objective of wanting to be something even though it might have been something which is not clearly and specifically defined, i.e., as in being a doctor, accountant, etc.

Praise was given to the Admissions Office in response to the question, "What can we do to help clarify to the totally unknowing person what college is all about?" One woman said she hadn't known what a credit was, what a semester was or any such terminology. She felt the information given by one of our counselors was of particular benefit and that other students could profit by understanding some of the things that perhaps all of us in the College staff/faculty take very much for granted because we know them so well.

A strong case was made by all of these students for the desirability of peer advisement. Apparently, many of these nontraditional students have been influential in helping other students to continue at the College and, as well, have induced people to attend in the first place.

Comments were made about faculty apathy reflected in such forms as not always meeting their classes, unwillingness to serve as advisors for clubs and organizations, and reluctance to deal with students on a one-to-one basis. Question was asked, "Is the College interested in you and your success while you are here?" Pretty much the answer was "Yes," particularly counselors and those faculty in courses in which the student had an interest. When asked why their peers and classmates had dropped out or not finished, some of the responses were that the people who had left were not ready in the first place, were not prepared to give their all, or "didn't have any goals".

The suggestion was made, not facetiously, that perhaps the College should build in a delay factor in admitting people so they had "a couple of years to be out working", doing other things before attempting college and, thereby, achieve a certain degree of maturity so as to enable them to succeed when they finally get here.

The view of an international student was that the students he has seen who appeared to have goals lasted longer--as opposed to those who evidently did not have goals and who quit sooner. This had implications for public relations work at the institution to stress goals in such areas as Open College, Liberal Arts, and so on.

The students were really impressed by the fact that the College was conducting this study. They were a little suspicious in the beginning and wanted to know why it was being done, but were pleased by the notion that the College cared enough about student life and about their own wants to conduct a study as exhaustive as this one appeared to them to be.

When asked the question, " Were do you go for help?," these people seemed to know the "pressure points" of the institution quite well, and all agreed that they turned to their faculty, their classroom instructors, for assistance although several students went to Center IV for problems of a general counseling nature. Most said they preferred their teachers from the classroom who, they said, knew them better than anybody else, to any other advice-givers that they could get. No mention was made of faculty advisors by this group as being a useful source for help. Again and again the comment was made that teachers who knew students on a day-to-day basis were much more able to help than any other staff members who ewre seen only sporadically as need arises. Conversely, they said they did not know that they had advisors until these people sent them letters or until the advisor's name showed up on their midterm grade reports.

From what they said about counselors, it seemed that they were equating these people to the high school guidance counselor type for whom they had low or no regard in their earlier academic lives and perhaps there were implications here to publicize and make known the difference between the College's kind of counseling assistance and that found in high school. Also, as noted, another phenomenon was that if a student had a bad experience with one instructor in terms of advice-giving, he or she would seek another one but if this happened with a counselor, the student was loath to go back to any form of counseling (again, possibly, a holdover from high school days).

The salient feature which emerged from the interview of these nontraditional students was their maturity as the factor which kept them going and their identification with goals and objectives which they felt many of the younger students did not have. This was a cheerful, positive and very loyal group which has come to identify closely with Middlesex County College.

Hispanic Students

There seemed to be general agreement in the group that the instructors discriminated against CETA students. They felt that it was a preconceived notion amongst faculty that these people were not capable of passing their courses.

One positive feature cited by a female respondent was the tutoring services at the College; she was "astounded" that we have them and has taken advantage of them which she felt was one of the reasons she was still attending.

Another was very appreciative of instructors who would be critical of her skills, in this case in English, and help her to better herself in the foundations of our language. She was really "turned on" by this and liked the idea that she was not, as a result, "going to be a dummy anymore."

One of the students pointed out, and the others agreed, that many of these Hispanic students had family--brothers and sisters at home--who were struggling through high school. And now that these MCC students were taking college level courses, they felt a tremendous sense of worth in being able to contribute and help their younger brothers and sisters at home with their high school work. This came across as one of the major benefits of their education here.

A point was made by a woman that students like herself who became tutors and helpers--in her case in the accounting club--felt a tremendous sense of self-worth through the help they have given to others.

A student said that the faculty used "big words" and that students did not want to go to the faculty person lest they might appear stupid by asking what the words mean--so they then went to their tutors who explained them.

What did it take to succeed here? They concurred that it was largely motivation and "feeling good about yourself"--"you don't have to be smart but you have really got to put out". Belief in yourself was very important too. This suggested the need for a means of promoting positive self-thinking on the part of the student--perhaps more encouragement within the atmosphere of the College, as in the comment of a student about his chemistry teacher, an adjunct, who put her phone number on the board and said, "If you need any help don't hesitate to call me". This was the kind of positive reinforcement that everyone seemed to agree was needed.

In a discussion of the Financial Aid Office, many students found it to be very helpful, yet others said they had heard that the Financial Aid Office "discriminated against Blacks and Puerto Ricans". Students seemed to have a misunderstanding about the nature of work-study jobs, and how they were linked to an overall financial aid package and tended to get discouraged when they could not find a job immediately.

Nontraditional students, such as many of this group seemed to be, tended to approach their instructors for advice in how to handle their own lives vis-a-vis being parents and students at the same time. And in the case cited here, one of the instructors in a flippant manner suggested the student put her "kids up for adoption" which obviously he didn't mean. But it underscored the fact the instructor might better have made a referral for counseling rather than deliver such an offhand, thoughtless remark.

As came out in many of these interviews, the students tended to feel closer to the instructors, with whom they spend much more time than anybody else on campus and, as a result, they turned to them--and when at times they could not get help, they felt devastated. The consensus was that the instructor should act as a referrer or mediator and direct people to proper resources for help.

Faculty served as primary role models. When students were asked the question, "Who on this campus would you most like to be like?" the first two responses were, an accounting teacher and a chemistry teacher, with glowing praise for both.

One student in this group felt so uncomfortable with English that she had to be questioned in Spanish and gave her response in Spanish indicating that using English was still an ordeal.

Students, when asked, "What's the last office on this campus you want to go to with a problem?", replied, "the Registrar and Financial Aid". Stating that, "He's supposed to be there to help, not to judge", the students expressed a need for much deep counseling in Financial Aid.

Discrimination was commented on again and most students agreed that it was caused by self-segregation into ethnic groups, "like in the cafeteria and around the campus"--also that most students came to the College "expecting to be discriminated" against and that this really did not happen.

Hispanic students commented, however, that if there were not Hispanic and Black counselors and staff members on campus, they would not have come here--that it was essential to have somebody of one's own ethnic background to whom one could turn.

When asked why they thought students left, they replied that it was not because of transfer to another school; rather, problems at home, money situations and "giving up on themselves". As these Hispanics put it, minority students had multiple difficulties, not only confronting all the problems they endured on the campus but facing negative attitudes at home amongst brothers, sisters and parents. The attitude there was "Ah, you are going to the College, you're not going to make it, it's a white institution, you're not white." Many students tended to

leave because they were overwhelmed by problems they could not overcome whi[illegible]n the campus. They got no support at home and they just dec[illegible]ed after a while to give it all up.

A woman commented on the fact that all her sister, a twelfth grader in high school, had to do was worry about her studies, whereas the speaker had children and her baby sitter was about to quit on her which might force her to leave the institution.

Other than tutoring service and EOF, these students tended to be unaware of or cynical about other student services on campus.

The home situation of these people seemed to have the greatest impact on their retention or attrition at the institution. Attrition from this group seemed to be caused more by convergence of pressures from outside the campus, in combination with some centered at the institution--more so than their inability or lack of capacity as students.

On balance, the Hispanics presented an image of cheerful yet wary positivism about their attendance here. They sensed that their difficulties as students were occasioned primarily by factors beyond the purview of the College.

Black Students

This group was somewhat interested, if not apprehensive, about the purpose of the interview, which could have been a reflection of their own insecurity on this campus. A student, with regard to her expectations of college, stated that she thought things would get progressively harder beginning with junior high school. In her mind college would be the most difficult of all but it has not turned out to be quite so difficult as she thought it would be. She noted that the difference between college and high school was that you had to work on your own a lot more. The same student said that she lives in Union County but did not want to attend the County College there because she had many friends from high school who attended Union and she didn't want to fall into a situation where she would get into problems with peers and perhaps as a result not do well.

Another student related that the reason why he had come was because he found that Middlesex did not require the SAT for admission and he thus had the opportunity to attend without it; also that he could be admitted at mid-year. He found the professors to be fairly relaxed which made him feel comfortable and he related that he had been invited to their offices on several occasions to receive help.

Although one student related that he wished there were more buildings so that he could ostensibly "go to several of them on campus during the course of the day", he preferred MCC to the megastructure found at Somerset.

One student related that he felt one of the reasons why students left was that they came to college in the first place because of pressure from their parents, but once they arrived on campus they realized that they were not ready for college yet. So they decided to leave and perhaps go out and find a job that would "keep their parents off their back." Another stated that

a friend would walk up to his peers and ask them, "Hey are we going to class?," and then say, "Well, it's a nice day so why don't we go somewhere else instead of class. I can afford to miss a day." He added that the student "couldn't see far enough into the future to realize that he's not putting one over on the teacher but is instead hurting himself by not attending class". The same student observed that another friend of his was accustomed to doing whatever he wanted to do and he followed his friends so that when they decided to come to Middlesex he came too, not necessarily out of an interest in getting a college education, but rather to be with his pals--then when they began to drop out, he also dropped out, following them, indicating that there was no real sense of identification with the College, only with his friends.

Another student related that her friends' reasons for leaving were that they had found the bureaucratic "red tape" unbearable. Time after time, she related, the different offices had misplaced transcripts and lost other papers and students had to do a lot of running around to get anything done.

However, she just became more determined to stay because she wasn't about to let the "hassle" get the best of her. She added that it really was a shame students had to go through so much bureaucratic aggravation just to get a college degree. A man commented sarcastically when the above statement was made that it would be "too easy to make it better for the students"... that "students need to be harassed a bit".

A student stated that all the people behind the desk at the Registrar's office appeared to be "very apprehensive and nervous about their jobs". "They're afraid to take any initiative, they need that safeguard, that piece of paper that clears them of responsibility for any wrong-doing; except people ought to be willing to take a chance and make a decision on their own instead of hiding behind a piece of paper".

One student related that in an English class the professor told the students that the course would be so difficult that very few of them would make it through. As a result, the class which started off with 34 students, had by the end of the first week, dwindled down to 12, by which time the professor admitted to the survivors that he didn't like large classes. The impression was that he had intimidated them deliberately to get students to withdraw from the class so he would have a more manageable group.

One of the faculty members announced that Middlesex County College gives a student the opportunity to fail "rather than the opportunity to pass." One female student stated that it was her impression that in order to pass the course she had to go to the teacher for a conference. She did not want to go alone, however, because she had heard from another student that this particular professor had "gotten fresh with her", but she went to the conference, nevertheless, and the professor didn't really say anything to her, he just attempted to sit close to her and asked her how she liked the class--and she got the distinct impression he had something else on his mind.

Students were then asked if they felt that the professors were concerned with seeing them graduate and move on to better things and the group responded that some of them were and some of them really didn't seem to care.

A student gave an example of a business law course where the professor either did not care that much about presenting the material or didn't know how to relate it. She got the impression that perhaps he knew the material but that he didn't really know how to teach, so rather than spend some time trying to convey the material to the students, he would just say, "Well, read the chapter." Students would then go home, read the chapter and come back and he'd say, "Are there any questions?" and she noted that some students just would not

speak up, and he would say, "O.K. if there are no questions, then we will go on and read the next chapter." The problem seemed to be in his method.

A student added that she was told to drop out of the course though she failed only two tests towards the end of the semester. She said that by that time, about half the class was gone already because they were so dissatisfied with his way of teaching the course. This student, incidentally, took the teacher's advice and did drop out.

Another student said she encountered a teacher who, she said, was quite prejudiced because he just came out and said that he felt that Blacks were inferior. She went up to him after class and asked him if he really meant what he'd said and he replied, "Well, sure." Then he used South Africa as an example. He stated that if Blacks weren't inferior, they wouldn't be in the situation that they're in there, whereupon the woman said that she asked him if he really had to come out and say that Blacks were inferior. He said he was sorry, but that's the way he felt. She stated that in class, he would ignore her and other Black students when they raised their hands.

A self-identified CETA student stated, after having been here for a short time, that she felt quite comfortable with her experiences at Middlesex and good about herself too because she did have some concerns initially about having been out of school for a long time and about her own capabilities. Also, she related that her CETA experiences early on were not positive, perhaps because the program

was so new and it seemed to her that it was just thrown together in kind of a hasty fashion so she was advised to take some subjects she didn't want.

Another stated that when she first came, she felt lost, didn't know anyone, and had no one to identify with. Further, she was assigned an advisor whose area was not the same as hers, so that she felt she had nowhere to turn. She was having a problem with a particular course and needed some advice as to what to do so she went to the advisor and asked what should be done and the advisor simply said, "Drop the course." He didn't really seem to have the insight or interest to talk to her and propose alternatives.

She has since come back filled with the determination to succeed. When asked how things were different now that she was back, she stated that things haven't really changed that much except in her the certain knowledge that "I need a degree to get out and get a job".

From what they had said, one of the primary reasons for students leaving, is that they did not identify or feel a sense of kinship, with the institution so that a faculty member or counselor could become significant to a given student and that can make the difference between a student remaining in college or dropping out.

In the final analysis, one could infer from this session that there was a message. Even though this group did not appear to be totally representative of the Black population at large, some problems emerged which may be representative. Therefore, anything that we heard coming from this group suggests that it would be still more difficult here for Blacks who might not be quite so articulate nor quite so prepared to negotiate the obstacles found in institutions of higher education.

Faculty and Administration

The discussion in the beginning was largely occupied with the general philosophy of a two-year community college and whether or not this should embody the notion that students can come here and have the right to fail.

One point of view was that if the College had selective admissions, it would take a generally better-prepared group of students and could then expect that most of them would not fail or leave. However, in the case of Middlesex or a similar community college, they observed that with "open door" admissions, one took them all, a "mixed bag", and allowed them to fail or succeed with no penalty. (It was then pointed out that the institution is "open door" only in a few of its areas, namely, Business, Open College and Educational Technology and that selective criteria of varying degrees, which were consistent with the content of the various majors, were imposed.)

Some of the faculty differentiated between the students who were lost during the first two weeks of class and those who left from that point on through June, and tended to write off the former group as if they had never come here, saying that the College could spend enormous amounts of money to try and save a few of them, but it really was not worthwhile because students were "flaky" to begin with and would not make it even with substantial supportive services.

A faculty member observed that young people in general tended to think of college as being "a mecca or something really special" and that perhaps this institution was not fulfilling their expectations of what a college ought to be, particularly during the first few weeks, or even first semester, that those new students were here.

Another spoke up and said he felt that it was foolish of the College to even be meeting like this to investigate attrition, and in the discussion which followed between an administrator and the faculty member over the right to fail, the faculty member said, ".....that's a hell of a way to operate a college--on the premise that the students can come here and expect the right to fail." The administrator defended his position on the basis that there was "no big deal about coming to a two-year college", there were no big amounts of money lost and no recrimination. He went on to say that the student had the chance to try himself out without the fear of meaningful failure. He said that this is particularly true of "minorities, Blacks and the rest who feel they can't make it anyway". The faculty member quite heatedly said, "Now we are playing Pontius Pilate, and saying to these students, 'we gave you one more opportunity to fail in a lifetime of failures and here you've gone and done it again.'" "That," he observed, "is the system." Going further, "It is obvious that we have nowhere near the quantity nor, pardon the expression, the quality of counseling necessary for the needs of the kinds of students who come to this institution."

Quite wide disagreement ranged on the subject of faculty advisement and the fact that only a quarter of the students made use of their faculty advisors which, the aforementioned administrator said, was "their problem and part of the process by which they determined that they could not 'hack it' in college."

An administrator, who indicated that a lot of people she encountered were single parents or mature students who had unusual backgrounds, found that the ones who had support from their family and friends off campus which reinforced them when they got home, were the ones who were successful among this type of student.

One of the faculty made the point that a very small percentage of the student body could be affected in terms of positive retention by anything the College did, indicating that this was because of the many influences, both positive and negative, they were subject to off campus.

A faculty member said, somewhat agitatedly, that "the concern for student attrition is new but the problem is not." In his perception it had gone on for years yet: "Nobody has cared until now" because, he said, "the College is in money trouble." Clarification was made that, given the academic structure, higher enrollment does not necessarily net more money for the institution*--that it was being done because it "needed to be done."

*Two points: 1) more students means an arithmetically proportionate increase in faculty hiring, 2) State FTE funding ceases between 100% and 105% of institutional enrollment projections.

One of the administrators pointed out his opinion that the seeds for attrition were sown in high school through poor academic preparation and suggested that something in our orientation should prepare them for the amount of work they will be getting in college. Through this was seen the value of information being passed on to them much sooner in the process of admission and enrollment than just orientation itself. He added they were really overwhelmed in many cases by the amount of work that was expected of students.

An administrator commented that it was well-known out there in the high schools that Middlesex was an easy college to get into and was therefore considered a safe selection or backup choice for those making multiple applications. For these reasons, he added it was also known as "the place where the dummies go." The same administrator went on to say that it was a matter of record that Middlesex graduates do better at four-year institutions than either they did at the College or than those who started as freshmen at those institutions.

A faculty member observed that MCC students have a low self-image.

The concept of interviewing presently enrolled students, as had been explained at the outset, was questioned or challenged by the group, and the response by members of the committee was that, while there was input from many a student who withdrew from the institution, the reasons they gave at the time of withdrawal or slightly after tended to be socially acceptable, (namely, they left for financial reasons, for personal reasons, etc.), rather than the real reason and that it was felt present MCC students could provide clearer insight not only why they themselves have stayed, but why their colleagues and friends have left. It was also pointed out that the person who walked away and did not go through official withdrawal procedure obviously provided no reason why he or she has left.

A teacher criticized many of his colleagues throughout the faculty for their disdaining attitudes towards students which he has heard informally over coffee and in other unguarded moments. He said they refer to the students as "the kids" or "them" in a very much looking-down-the-nose attitude. He said that many of the faculty did not project that very important positive attitude, during the first week especially, which we should be projecting in order to build up and enhance students' chances of success.

A counselor pointed out that many of the young students who attended Middlesex were alone in an operational sense. He said that they came to college, went home, did not see their parents or other family members and were in essence functioning in a vacuum, which he stated could be very demoralizing for them. In other words, they were not getting support from anybody and he said that these were the ones who typically, needing help the most, did not come for it.

A faculty member made the point that one group of successful students will pass through the College, go on to their jobs or four-year institutions, look back at Middlesex and say, "Gee, they cared for me there, they were helpful and gave me the support I needed;" whereas, an equally large number will not succeed here and retrospectively label the faculty as aloof, distainful, and unhelpful. He suggested this was not so much a dichotomy in the faculty, rather that there were different kinds of students, basically those who succeed and those who do not--and that their perceptions of what went on at Middlesex differed according to what kind of person they were.

A faculty member observed that students might have tended to see college as a panacea for them, particularly if they were mixed up or unsure of themselves, and then when they got here they would find that it was anything but that, and as a result there would be a "letdown" which might lead to the student leaving the institution.

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ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANT PATTERNS OF PERCEPTIONS AND CONCERNS

Introduction:

Here the individual factor statements of the FACTORS section are combined and abstracted into the fifteen more universal but discrete aggregate student factors that emerged from the raw data and the group factors. These describe the interactions, relationships, and social/psychological processes encountered by students. For the analysis, each group is compared as to similarities and differences. The following significant patterns reveal those similarities and differences as indexed against the fifteen broad categories noted above.

As the reader will observe, very few universal similarities of perception emerged between the groups, a phenomenon which reinforces the individuality and uniqueness of each.

ANALYSIS OF SIGNIFICANT PATTERNS OF PERCEPTIONS AND CONCERNS

1. Teachers

Similarities - Similarities that emerged were that every single group mentioned that help was available for them at Middlesex County College and, in particular, the nontraditional and the veteran students felt that teachers cared about them. There was a feeling among mature women, nontraditionals, traditionals, Hispanics, and Black students that the better students were apt to get more help from the faculty. The help available was perceived differently among the various groups; traditional students, veterans, and Hispanics tended to have a feeling that help was readily available while former students, black students and mature women had less of a feeling that help was available, that one had to show initiative to get it, and occasionally that even that did not work to get the amount of help one felt was necessary.

Differences - As to teachers' caring, the differences between groups were that mature women found less caring among faculty, also that Blacks and veterans felt a lack of caring and that former students expressed a need for caring attitudes from faculty as a major factor in being successful students. Veterans and traditional students regarded the

faculty as generally very professional with suitable qualifications for teaching. Mature women and former students, however, felt that the faculty tended to be more oriented to upper division teaching and research, that some in the sciences were not teaching on the level at which these students could learn. Faculty members were perceived as role models by some traditional and Hispanic students. Although most Hispanics, Blacks and mature women felt some discrimination by teachers, there was a feeling that this could be related to the amount of subsidization that women and Hispanic and black students received. Mature women felt that the faculty was insensitive to their family and personal needs.

Teachers saw themselves as definite factors in the attrition of students; in the amount of motivation that could be provided by a teacher and the factor of "unhinging" some students. There was also a feeling among some faculty interviewed that other faculty were not interested in student success and tended to have a disdainful attitude toward students.

Students felt positive about teachers in psychology, mathematics, and engineering, and there was some negative feeling about some faculty of English and accounting, and mixed feelings about teachers of science.

2. Social Life

Similarities - Many of the groups tended to find an identity and consequently a social life within their own groups.

Traditional students found it within the curriculum, Blacks in their clubs, Hispanics in ethnic groups and around the cafeteria, and veterans in their work in the V.A. Office as work-study students.

While social life here did not appear particularly important to some of the groups, it did seem to matter a great deal to Hispanics and Blacks. Traditional students, veterans and Hispanics found it easy to make friends and to meet people on the campus.

Differences - The faculty appeared to be more a source of social contact for mature women and traditional students. Former students and veterans felt that dormitories would certainly help the social life on campus, that commuting hindered it and that consequently one's friends tended to be the people who were at home, not on campus. Mature women and veterans found no time for social life on campus. The Blacks felt an attitude of discrimination by both students and teachers--at least until they had proven themselves academically. There was a pervasive feeling among some Blacks that they were perceived as being inferior and could not succeed. Mature women and Blacks expressed interest in a swimming pool at the College. Hispanics said that they have expanded their social lives here. For nontraditional students, the social areas on campus were in the cafeterias and, for former students, the game room.

Veterans felt that Middlesex County College was a "marriage market." Nontraditional students were interested in a pub and would like to see more money put into the kinds of student activities that are generally open to all students, not just special interest groups.

The faculty seemed to feel that the dropout was the student who had "loner" tendencies rather than one who formed social ties easily and they wondered if there wasn't some way that faculty and staff could give support to those students.

3. Economics

Similarities -

There was no general thread of concern for financial matters through all the groups, although the mature women, Blacks and veterans, have some similarities. Mature women found that there were not enough on-campus jobs and the veterans said that in order to make it financially, they needed to work off campus. Black students and mature women associated being in college and their success in academics to obtaining well-paying jobs in the future.

Differences -

In differences, Blacks and mature women tended to worry about commuting, gasoline money, and use of public transportation--the irregular service was of concern.

Mature women were also concerned about articulation in transfer and wish that it were smoother in order to save time and money. Veterans preferred to live at home to save money. The faculty cited the need to work and transportation difficulties and costs among the students whom they have seen as threats to academic success in college.

4. Family

Similarities - The veterans, Hispanics, and mature women felt that having the emotional support of their families was absolutely essential to their success at the college. Blacks, former students and Hispanics felt a negative family influence; both in the pressure to attend college against their will in the first place, and in a lack of support while doing so. The latter was particularly reflected in comments by Hispanic students. The veterans seemed to have the strongest family support systems between their parents and wives, the support being both financial and emotional. Hispanics cited role models and their

families as reasons for coming to college--these models were influential to them and the Hispanic parents were influential on their children who were students. Women felt great home pressures; that the responsibilities of running a home and going to college were sometimes too great. Traditional and nontraditional students had siblings who had been here before and had helped them in their orientation to college. The faculty also reflected that having a support system was very important for the success of students and that if it was not apparent that a family support system is in existence, then the staff of the college should assume that role.

5. Advisors

Similarities - Every group saw advisors as not available and less than helpful--that advisors might be taking on the role reluctantly if at all. Blacks, women, veterans, and traditional students had the comments that advisors did not keep the hours that they were supposed to or that they were too busy to see them when they appeared. Veterans, Hispanic students, mature women and former students preferred to use counselors rather than advisors in advising situations.

Differences - Nontraditional students, Blacks, and veterans felt that, in general, advisors were not knowledgeable and that there was poor communication between advisor and student. Former students were completely turned off by advisors--found them not willing to help at all. Hispanic students saw their advisors as "terrific". (These turned out to be counselors.) Some veterans and nontraditional students were not aware that their advisors even existed. Blacks and nontraditional students thought that the advisor should provide some orientation to Middlesex County College

and that that was not being done. Veterans preferred to use their peers as advisors while traditional students turned to their curriculum teachers. Students who found their advisors helpful said that more helpers are needed for students. Faculty felt that students and advisors should be linked before the registration process and that the student should have the same advisor the whole time he or she is here. They remarked that the College compared well with other colleges, but still it was not good enough and that only 25% of the students ever saw their advisor because they were not compelled to do so.

6. Studying

Similarities - Women, nontraditional students and veterans agreed that there needed to be more quiet places to study on campus. These three groups had the most comments in this area of studying. Nontraditional students, women, veterans, Hispanics and former students agreed that there was too much noise wherever they study and the places that they normally study were the Library and the Community Learning Center.

Differences - Mature women said that less formal study can be done in the cafeteria and the lounges when they don't need to concentrate quite so much. Veterans tended to use empty classrooms, particularly in Raritan Hall, for studying. Study at home was mentioned only by women and

Hispanic students and these two groups also used other facilities such as the Woodbridge Library and the Rutgers University Library. Women, veterans and older students thought that the library here was too noisy. Younger students, more traditional students, thought it was more "like a morgue." The Community Learning Center was used by

Hispanic students but some nontraditional students were told not to study there, that it wasn't allowed. The women complained that it is difficult to study at home because of interference by their children.

7. Services

Similarities - Former students, Black students, Hispanic students and mature women saw the Registrar's Office as less than helpful; a place where they got the "run-around," where people were rude, and the last place where they would go with any problems. Veterans, Black students and mature women have had problems with the registration process. Nontraditional students, veterans, and former students were too busy or involved outside of the campus to participate in student activities. This factor was not mentioned by mature women but is assumed based on contextual observations they made. Mature women, nontraditional students, veterans, and former students found counseling helpful and tended to go to counselors with any problems that they had.

Differences - Women and Hispanic students saw the Financial Aid Office as understaffed and discriminatory. They did not get help there and the Financial Aid Office didn't seem to care about them. A complaint was expressed that work-study assignments were not related to career direction and that there were not enough jobs available. Traditional students saw the Registrar's Office as helpful although one might have a problem in getting a transcript. The veterans said that the registration process is good, particularly when it was done in advance. The desirability of a pub was noted by nontraditional students also the need for a swimming pool by Black students because these provide activity for all and not just special interest groups. Blacks tended to feel that more student leaders were needed. Although one former student said orientation was

worthless, women and former students found it helpful. Hispanics saw orientation as less-than-complete and observed that there ought to be more orientation to the various buildings and where to buy books. One said that the information on orientation arrived at her home on the day of orientation and she missed it because it had already happened. Faculty would like to see orientation extended into the first week of class. Veterans and Hispanic students said the library was too noisy, that there was not enough room there and that books and periodicals were insufficient, both in quantity and quality.

Traditional students did not know where to go for help on campus. Nontraditional students and women tended to go to the Admissions Office for help. Hispanic students found the whole college staff helpful. Former students, faculty and Hispanic students felt the need for more counselors. Nontraditional students preferred to go to teachers and friends for help while veterans, traditional students and Hispanic students found "the administration" helpful. Blacks complained that the "campus police pick on minorities". Women found the police helpful but objected to their carrying guns. Black students and Hispanic students said that a better communication system is needed, that there should be an information center on campus and that the College newspaper should be used more. The faculty would like a better student orientation to academics at the College. Hispanics said that Open College is "beautiful". Veterans saw the Veterans Office as helpful but felt that the staff needed more training and better information.

8. Image

Similarities - Nontraditional students, Hispanics, traditional students and veterans were proud to be at the College. Former students, veterans, Black students and nontraditional students would advise their friends to come here. Nontraditional students, former students, veterans, and traditional students all viewed Middlesex County College as a quality educational experience and a good college.

Differences - Black students and Hispanic students saw the College as an opportunity. The women saw MCC as a good place to begin--the faculty perceived it as an open door. The Blacks said that MCC has the image of "the only choice" for them--the only place which would take them. Women and Black students viewed the College as a good link to the four-year colleges. The faculty and staff thought that the image would be improved if the college were affiliated with a university. Before they came to MCC, women had heard that the college was a "glorified high school" and nontraditional students thought that MCC also had that image. Some former students said that their friends thought that the College was a "joke". Traditional students, before they came, viewed friends who came here as being "dumb". But, women perceived graduates of MCC as knowledgeable people who have good jobs. The veterans said that MCC compared well with Rutgers University--that the courses had the same content. The Blacks viewed MCC as having a good choice of special majors.

9. Motivation

Similarities - Women, traditional students, nontraditional students and veterans were motivated by goals--they knew what they want. The faculty saw lack of goal orientation as a factor in students dropping out. Women, nontraditional

students, veterans and Hispanic students felt that motivation was necessary to be successful at the College. Women and veterans found that motivation from within and self-discipline were very important. This was not noted by former students and the lack of commitment to the concept of self-development was seen as a factor in attrition by faculty and staff.

Differences - Women and veterans viewed time and age as factors in motivation; they were making an investment of time in the College and that motivated them. Nontraditional students believed that younger students who came to Middlesex were not ready for the experience. Veterans, Hispanics and Black students felt that they needed to work harder to succeed, that "you must be assertive to succeed," and veterans felt that having been in the service had taught them to cope with situations at the College. Black students felt that it took courage to come here, that the feeling of inferiority which they sensed provides a goad for success. Former students showed a lack of motivation; their temptation was to get up and leave the College, to just jump in the car and get away. Women and Black students viewed good jobs in the future as a motivating factor (that again reflects their goal orientation).

10. Maturity

Similarities - Hispanic students, Black students, former students, nontraditional students and veterans agreed that it was a mistake to come to college right after high school, that it was better to work first, gain a sense of maturity, set goals, and then come to college. Hispanics and veterans tended to be assertive in getting services and doing so on their own. Black students were mature in expressing their opinions, and nontraditional students showed the ability to cope.

Differences - Women, Black students and nontraditional students seemed to know the value of education. Nontraditional students and veterans agreed that younger students were immature, that they tended to do everything the easy way, that they did not have any "stick-to-itiveness" as far as getting a college education was concerned.

11. Caring

Similarities - Women, traditional students, nontraditional students, veterans and former students all found some people on campus who were interested in them and seemed to care for them. On the other hand, some women, traditional students, veterans, and former students felt that the College as an institution didn't care about them. The consensus was that there were individual people who did care and were interested, but that as an institution, the College generally did not care about them.

Differences - Black students expressed only care for each other. They seemed to form a support network which sustained them, so it did not matter that the College did not care. Hispanics found a feeling of community on campus, a "oneness." Veterans and former students felt that caring

on the part of the institution was an important factor in their success. Veterans and traditional students thought that Middlesex County College was more personal than a four-year college.

12. Why They Came

Similarities - Every group except for the traditional and black students cited cost as a factor in coming. Some of the women, nontraditional students, traditional students, veterans and former students enrolled because of the reputation of a particular curriculum. Every group saw location--the closeness to home--as a major factor in their coming. Traditional students, Hispanics, Black students and former students all showed influences by the family as reasons for coming to the College.

Differences - Veterans, former students, and faculty and staff saw MCC being a two-year college as a reason for coming. In other words one could set an intermediate goal of the Associate Degree and then go on from there. Veterans, women and Hispanics saw Middlesex as a good place to start. Blacks, nontraditional students and former students believed that MCC was the only place that would take them. Traditional students and Hispanics cited transportation as one of the factors in their coming. Women and traditional students came in part to expand their social relationships. The faculty saw reasons for students' selecting the College as a resource in problem solving; that is, people with psychological problems coming to use the College as a therapeutic environment, also that students needed to only make a short-term commitment. Veterans, Hispanics, and faculty viewed the availability of developmental work as a reason for attracting students. The reputation of the school was cited by former students, veterans and traditional students as a reason for coming.

Women came because of good transfer possibility and to get more out of life (enlarge their perceptions of the world and increase their social life).

13. Why They Leave

Similarities - Women, former students, veterans and faculty cited financial reasons as primary for why people leave the college.

Differences - Veterans and faculty viewed poor preparation in younger students as a factor in their leaving. Women noticed lack of motivation in others. Traditional students mentioned "no goals" as a reason to leave while former students mentioned loss of interest. Former students and faculty thought that intervention before a problem got too immense to handle was not available here--more counseling was needed before problems reached such large proportions. Veterans and faculty viewed pre-graduation transfer as a reason to leave; this was not necessarily negative and faculty suggested that the definition of attrition be reexamined. Many women left because of changes in their lives. Hispanics gave lack of home support and the whiteness of the College as reasons for leaving, while former students cited rough academics. For veterans, an outside job was sometimes more appealing, and the faculty saw personal and psychological problems as reasons for leaving.

14. Self-Image

Similarities - Women, nontraditional and Hispanic students have experienced personal growth and development while at the College. Traditional students have also gained independence and a feeling of being adults.

Differences - Hispanics and former students felt that their problems tended to be within one's self and that they could be defeating. Women tended to have a good self-image which was reflected in their willingness to work hard and change. Veterans felt that they were already mature--that they had goal orientation. Blacks and Hispanics felt discriminated against, they lacked confidence because of this perceived attitude on the part of the College and believed that they had to prove themselves or change in some way. Former students and the faculty thought that a positive self-image was necessary for college success. Faculty deemed that the negative self-image of students was a reflection of the College's image in the community, particularly that of high school counselors. A real commitment to helping other people grow and change was shown by Hispanic students and veterans.

15. Flexibility

Similarities - Women, traditional students and veterans agreed that the College's small classes were a distinct advantage over four-year colleges as this allowed for classroom interaction with the faculty. Women, veterans, nontraditional students, and faculty concurred that the semester break should begin before Christmas.

Differences - Women and nontraditional students said that majors were too structured, specifically Nurse Education and Liberal Arts and that there should be more electives allowed. Women felt the need to know their schedules well in advance in order to do home planning. Veterans found flexibility in teachers who allowed them to change sections to accommodate work schedules. Traditional students said there was a flexibility within their divisions allowing for

change in goal through curriculum changes. Former students wanted to see more open laboratory times, particularly in the Electrical Engineering area. Veterans viewed the choices of curriculum, the variety as appealing. Former students observed there was too much time between classes. The faculty would like to see a one college concept, in order to mainstream continuing education students--and provide maximum scheduling flexibility.

FINDINGS

The following aggregate group findings result from the summary statements as found in the "Similarities and Differences" section of this report. It consists of 30 abstractions of the original information which establish relationships between 1) the institution--its administration, faculty, staff and programs--and 2) its student consumers. These findings reveal the interaction process between students' needs and institutional provisions and relate to the students' outlook in both cognitive and affective ways.

1. Elements which cause increased respect for faculty include: their knowledge, professionalism, friendship, caring and interest in their students.

2. Faculty are apt to give more help to better students.

3. Majors which are academically challenging are more attractive when faculty offer support such as encouragement, tutoring and being available for questions.

4. Faculty and staff who "go the extra mile" increase the attractiveness of the college environment for students.

5. When the following elements are present, they tend to decrease classroom effectiveness: a. prejudice; b. upper-division teaching techniques; c. teaching from the book; d. lack of interest or unwillingness to help on the part of the teacher.

6. Students seeking help from within their own departments generally find that help available.

7. The more that teachers demonstrate caring and helpful attitudes toward students, the more the students feel that they can succeed.

8. Advisors are not nearly as available, helpful and informed as the students wish and need them to be.

9. Students seek out teachers, peers and counselors, for help with college-related problems and questions more than they do their advisors.

10. Successful students rate themselves high in initiative, maturity, goal orientation, sociability and ability to develop support networks.

11. Experienced students see the College as having attractive majors and expect favorable job and college transfer placement.

12. Students who find orientation from several of the following sources tend to feel better adjusted to college life: family and friends who have attended here, formal orientation procedure, faculty, staff, chairpeople, advisors, counselors and departmental academic orientation.

13. Many students seek various styles of group identity, however, commuting tends to interfere with the process.

14. Working at part-time jobs, working in the home, and even full-time work appear almost universally as means of coping with financial pressure.

15. The more students have a good experience here, the more they tend to advise their friends to come here.

16. Veterans, Blacks and Hispanics feel that the more assertive students are more successful.

17. All student groups, with the exception of traditionals, say that working and the maturity gained thereby tend to make them more successful students.

18. Good self-image, willingness to work hard and to change are characteristics reflected by successful students.

19. Availability of courses, flexibility in scheduling, good teacher interaction and small class size are all reflected as reasons why students prefer Middlesex to other institutions.

20. Students, former students and faculty see attritors as having poor reasons for attending, not enough initiative, lack of maturity, lack of goals, or poor preparation, low self-perception, "loner" attitudes, personal problems, little family and peer support and economic problems.

21. Faculty and former students say that a positive self-image is essential for college success.

22. When students find less than adequate orientation to student life, social life and academic policies, they tend to have more problems adjusting to college.

23. Student groups suffering the greatest attrition also reported the most negative family influence.

24. While remaining students cite goal orientation as a major factor in their success, students who leave cite the lack of goals as being a primary cause for leaving.

25. Majors which are structurally rigid tend to be less attractive if, in fact, flexibility in academic planning is desired by the student.

26. Students who desire a quiet study space find a scarcity of such places on campus.

27. Services and staff, which project an aura of insensitivity, tend to disappoint students and turn them away.

28. Student activities designed for special interest groups tend to not meet the need for student activities for all students.

29. The more student activities allow individual participation, the more they are seen as desirable.

30. Off-campus preoccupations and involvements often preclude involvement in student activities.

At this point, it is appropriate to return to our original purposes and summarize our work in terms of conclusions which are linked directly to the findings. The following provides a listing of those findings which are deemed by the subcommittee to support our conclusion.

CONCLUSIONS

A variety of salient information is developed and presented throughout the report and its appendices and further distilled into a series of statements in the "Findings" section. While the Committee has drawn several conclusions here, the reader will surely not be precluded from developing others.

I. Retention of students is the responsibility of the entire College community from the maintenance staff through the Board of Trustees. Students need to know and feel that the institution, as a whole, cares about them having a successful academic experience here...

4. Faculty and staff who "go the extra mile" increase the attractiveness of the college environment for students.

12. Students who find orientation from several of the following sources tend to feel better adjusted to college life: family and friends who have attended here, formal orientation procedure, faculty, staff, chairpeople, advisors, counselors and departmental academic orientation.

13. Many students seek various styles of group identity, however, commuting tends to interfere with the process.

22. When students find less than adequate orientation to student life, social life and academic policies, they tend to have more problems adjusting to college.

25. Majors which are structurally rigid tend to be less attractive if, in fact, flexibility in academic planning is desired by the student.

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27. Services and staff, which project an aura of insensitivity, tend to disappoint students and turn them away.

28. Student activities designed for special interest groups tend to not meet the need for student activities for all students.

29. The more student activities allow individual participation, the more they are seen as desirable.

II. The teaching faculty play a key, pivotal role in student retention. Positive or negative faculty attitudes toward teaching, caring or not caring about student success and creating an environment conducive to success are factors cited by students as critical to retention. Students consider accessible, competent and thorough advisement to be very important to their academic success...

1. Elements which cause increased respect for faculty include: their knowledge, professionalism, friendship, caring and interest in their students.

2. Faculty are apt to give more help to better students.

3. Majors which are academically challenging are more attractive when faculty offer support such as encouragement, tutoring and being available for questions.

5. When the following elements are present, they tend to decrease classroom effectiveness: a. prejudice; b. upper-division teaching techniques; c. teaching from the book; d. lack of interest or unwillingness to help on the part of the teacher.

6. Students seeking help from within their own departments generally find that help available.

7. The more that teachers demonstrate caring and helpful attitudes toward students, the more the students feel that they can succeed.

8. Advisors are not nearly as available, helpful and informed as the students wish and need them to be.

9. Students seek out teachers, peers, and counselors for help with college-related problems and questions more than they do their advisors.

12. Students who find orientation from several of the following sources tend to feel better adjusted to college life: family and frierds who have attended here, formal orientation procedure, faculty, staff, chairpeople, advisors, counselcrs and departmental academic orientation.

III. There exists a need for consistent communication and shared information among all offices which communicate to and interact with students...

16. Veterans, Blacks and Hispanics feel that the more assertive students are more successful.

22. When students find less than adequate orientation to student life, social life and academic policies, they tend to have more problems adjusting to college.

IV. Off-campus support by family and friends is essential to college success for many of our students...

9. Students seek out teachers, peers and counselors for help with college-related problems and questions more than they do their advisors.

14. Working at part-time jobs, working in the home, and even full-time work appear almost universally as means of coping with financial pressure.

23. Student groups suffering the greatest attrition also reported the most negative family influence.

30. Off-campus preoccupations and involvements often preclude involvement in student activities.

V. ...many students interviewed are proud of Middlesex County College and its reputation...

11. Experienced students see the College as having attractive majors and expect favorable job and college transfer placement.

15. The more students have a good experience here, the more they tend to advise their friends to come here.

19. Availability of courses, flexibility in scheduling, good teacher interaction and small class size are all reflected as reasons why students prefer Middlesex to other institutions.

VI. Successful students believe that lack of goals, inadequate prior preparation for college and immaturity are primary among the reasons that their classmates "walk away"...

10. Successful students rate themselves high in initiative, maturity, goal orientation, sociability and ability to develop support networks.

17. All student groups, with the exception of traditionals, say that working and the maturity gained thereby tend to make them more successful students.

18. Good self-image, willingness to work hard and to change are characteristics reflected by successful students.

20. Students, former students and faculty are attritors as having poor reasons for attending, not enough initiative, lack of maturity, lack of goals, or poor preparation, low self-perception, "loner" attitudes, personal problems, little family and peer support and economic problems.

21. Faculty and former students say that a positive self-image is essential for college success.

24. While remaining students cite goal orientation as a major factor in their success, students who leave cite the lack of goals as being a primary cause for leaving.

In conclusion, the subcommittee wishes to express its enthusiasm for this exciting and innovative project, a sentiment echoed by those faculty and staff who served on the interview panel. In addition, the student participants were very impressed that the institution would undertake a project of such evident magnitude for the purpose of improving student well-being at the College--so, all told, it is apparent that the process not only obtained valuable material, but served a worthy end in and of itself.

Further, it is important to the goals of the College community that the information gained from the study be utilized in staff development and other appropriate activities to assist in the implementation of retention strategies, to sensitize College personnel at all levels to student perceptions of their actions and help them become better agents for retention.

The subcommittee recommends that these objectives be approached under the overall aegis of a comprehensive retention plan and that one of the plan's components consists of an ongoing series of focused group interviews for the purpose of further exploration of the retention/attrition problem, also further quantitative analysis should be made of the factors which emerged and the thirty correlary statements in the Findings section.

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EXHIBIT "A"

April 10, 1980

Ms. Shirley Gilanyi

Dear Ms. Gilanyi:

A campuswide committee is investigating student opinions of the campus academic and student life with an interest in developing recommendations for possible improvement. You have been selected as a student representative to meet informally with other students, faculty and staff to discuss the areas referenced above. This meeting will occur on April 22, 1980 at 12 noon in College Center 310. If this time is inconvenient, please call Laraine Church at 548-6000, ext. 373, to arrange an alternate time.

In recognition of your assistance with this project, you will be provided with two free tickets for lunch at the Corral Restaurant.

We thank you in advance for your particiaption in this project.

Sincerely,

John R. Herrling

Gordon Harrower

9168A

EXHIBIT "A2"

May 14, 1980

Ms. Lory E. Devries
904 Belmont Avenue
So. Plainfield, NJ 07080

Dear Ms. Devries:

A campuswide committee is investigating student opinions of the College's academic and student life with an interest in developing recommendations for possible improvement.

We believe that, as a former student here, you could provide valuable insights and viewpoints which will be particularly beneficial for those who are presently attending Middlesex and those who will in the future.

We would appreciate your meeting informally for no more than an hour with a few other former students, faculty and staff to discuss these areas. This meeting will occur on Thursday, May 22, 1980 at 6:00 p.m. in College Center 310. If you are unable to make it, we'd appreciate your calling (548-6000, extension 373) and letting us know.

In recognition of your help with this project, you will be provided with $10.00 which ought to at least cover your transportation costs.

We thank you in advance for your participation.

Sincerely,

John Herrling

Gordon Harrower, Jr.

9704A

EXHIBIT "B"

Time & Date
of Interview

RETENTION COMMITTEE
STUDENT GROUP INTERVIEW OUTLINE

Suggested questions for interviewers to use.

I. REASONS FOR COMING TO MIDDLESEX COUNTY COLLEGE

1. What one thing stands out in your mind about why you chose to come to Middlesex County College?

2. Who was most influential in your decision to come to MCC?
Parents? Friends? You?

3. What did you expect upon arrival?

II. WHAT STUDENTS FOUND AFTER ARRIVAL

1. What were your first reactions when you first arrived on campus (your first semester)? (classes, fellow students, teachers, atmosphere, etc.)

2. Were you prepared academically for college work at MCC?

3. During the first semester, did you feel adequately oriented to college life and work?

4. Have your career/educational goals changed since beginning studies? Why?

5. Where do you study?

A. Where do you spend your free time?

6. What is necessary to succeed at MCC?

III. SUPPORT AND INFLUENCES

1. Do you feel comfortable here at MCC?

2. Did you find appropriate role models at MCC?

3. Do you feel the College is interested in you and your future?

4. If you had a problem, is there anyone on campus you would go to?

5. Do you use MCC as part of your social life? How? (dances, plays, concerts, sporting activities)

IV. IMAGE

1. Would you wear an MCC T-shirt to a party with friends (during a vacation break)?

2. After leaving school for the day, what would draw you back to campus?

3. How does MCC rank as a college in your mind?

4. When you have a question or problem, who do you go to?

If not, why not?

5. Which college office "bugs" you the most?

6. Does being a student at MCC make you feel like a college student? Why, why not?

7. What kind of students do you think come here?

8. What is your image of a college student?

9. Why is coming to college important to you?

10. Do you have any friends here?

    If yes, are they new or old ones?

11. How do friends who are not students here think about MCC and you as a student here?

12. How does it feel to be a student as compared to being in a job?

GENERAL

1. Is there a chance that you may leave MCC before graduation?

   If yes, why?

2. Do you feel that by attending college you are losing a chance to earn money and have fun?

3. Could a job at any point become more important to you than continuing in the college?

4. Is it difficult being a student at MCC and, if so, what could the College do to make it easier?

5. Have any of your friends left MCC?

   Have they told you why they left?

6. Would you advise a friend to come to MCC? Why, why not?

EXHIBIT "C"

RETENTION COMMITTEE
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR GROUP INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Demographic Data:
1. How many semesters (including this one) have you been at MCC?
2. Do you intend to graduate from MCC?
3. What is your curriculum?

Please answer all questions as honestly as possible - results will be used for research purposes and to improve our College for students. Your answers are confidential.

I. Rate the following reasons for coming to MCC according to their importance in your decision.

	Very Important	Important	Not Important	Not Considered
Convenience/close to home				
Low cost				
Academic reputation				
Curriculum I wanted				
Small classes/faculty relationships				
Attractiveness of campus				
Size of College				
Influence of parents				
Influence of friends				
Influence of high school counselors				
Overall reputation of MCC				
Other (please list)				

II. Rate your level of satisfaction with the following features, conditions or services you have found since you arrived.

	High	Medium	Low	Not Used
Your curriculum				
Quality of instruction				
Class size				
Difficulty of major courses				
Difficulty of other courses				
Library services				
Faculty advisement				
Tutoring				
Instructor availability				
Counseling services				
Placement services				
Financial aid				
Admissions process				
Registration process				
Athletics				
Clubs				
Concerts/Movies/Trips				
Food service				
Parking				
Public Transportation				

Other and/or comments on above:

III. How important do you think the following reasons were in influencing your friends and classmates who have left MCC?

	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Conflict with job			
Courses too difficult			
Lost interest			
Registration procedures			
Transferred to another college			
Could not get advice/help			
College not relevant to goals			
Felt MCC wa not "college"			
Inconvenient schedule			
Felt they didn't "belong"			
Financial problems			
Transportation			
Lack of proper orientation			
Personal/home problems			

Other and/or comments on above:

1. What features about MCC do you like and appreciate the most?

2. What features do you appreciate least that might influence you to leave?

Exhibit "D"
Retention Committee
Group Interview Schedule

Date	Time	Group	# Inv	# Pres*	Interviewers
4/22/80	10:00 AM - 12:00 N	Faculty & Administrators	20	11	Dohrenwend, Harrower, Herrling, Olson
4/22/80	12:00 N - 2:00 PM	Mature Women	20	8	Harrower, Herrling, Poppel, Smith
4/22/80	3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Traditional #1	20	6	Dudka, Harrower, Lisboa, Maugle
4/23/80	12:00 N - 2:00 PM	Traditional #2	20	8	Harrower, Herrling, Maugle, Zifchak
4/23/80	3:00 PM - 5:00 PM	Nontraditional	20	7	Gordon, Harrower, Herrling, Lazzarotti
4/24/80	10:00 AM - 12:00 N	Hispanic	40	10	Basadre, Harrower, Herrling, Lisboa, Poppel
4/24/80	12:00 N - 2:00 PM	Blacks	40	9	Carter, Gordon, Harrower, Herrling, Olson
4/25/80	10:00 AM - 12:00 N	Veterans	20	7	Dohrenwend, Harrower, Herrling, Zifchak
6/5/80	6:00 PM - 7:30 PM	Former students	50	6	Harrower, Houpt, Smith

*Minimum Valid Number = 6
Maximum Desired Number = 12

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